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**Investigating the hotel reception experience in a developing country context:
a stakeholders' perspective from Ghana**

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
at
Lincoln University
by
Yaa Mawufemor Akubia

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Abstract of a thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Yaa Mawufemor Akubia

Globally, the hospitality industry has moved to an era of delivering unique experiences to consumers, and the hotel industry is no exception. Leisure and hospitality businesses provide their guest with customised travel and hospitality experiences. With the changing trends in the hospitality industry, hotels are now directing their efforts towards creating holistic experiential service events that connect individually with guests on an emotional and personal level to create memorable experiences.

This study has been informed by theories of the experience economy, co-creation, and servicescapes. Experiences are co-created between service staff and guests within a servicescape. Co-creation requires both staff and guest to be active participants in the production and consumption of the experience.

The literature on hotel studies has focused on hotels generally, such as the entire hotel experience, restaurants, housekeeping but not precisely the reception experiences at check-in. In a developing economy, there has been relatively limited empirical research related to the hotel experiences in Ghana, particularly from the perspective of the guests and hosts (receptionists and managers). There is also a lack of specific research using the three theories (co-creation, servicescapes, and experience economy) to study hotel reception experiences.

The aim of this study was to explore the hotel reception experience—and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in this experience—within a developing economy's (Ghana) context. This study adopts a mixed-method approach, incorporating quantitative methods (361 guest surveys) and qualitative techniques (38 staff and managers interviews) to assess stakeholders' perceptions of the hotel reception experience in 3-star to 5-star hotels.

The findings of the study show that the front office setting of the hotel was key to the kind of atmosphere the hotel aimed at portraying. Elements that were used to create such atmosphere include artefacts, symbols, music, and dress code of receptionists. Artefacts carry messages and meanings about the destination, its history, values, and unique identity. Domestic hotels in this study were more likely to display these cultural elements. By contrast, the front office of international hotels align with the worldwide standards for each brand.

This study found that the co-creation of the experience takes the form of guests having warm face-to-face interactions with staff. Receptionists, managers and guests stressed that the human element to the service experience makes a difference to the reception experience, with communication being key. Hotel reception experiences are co-created between the guest and the receptionist within the setting of the front office and the broader cultural context of the destination, Ghana.

Receptionists put in considerable effort to co-construct successful hospitality experiences with the guests. However, the face-to-face contact of the receptionists with guests created cross-cultural challenges, such as language barriers between receptionists and international guests, abuse by the guests they serve and socio-economic inequality between guest and receptionists. This study also reveals that co-creation can go wrong.

This study found that the intersection between co-creation and the demands of the job creates emotional labour for the receptionists. Emotional labour always requires staff to portray a feeling of cheerfulness, even if that is not how they feel. Interestingly, regardless of the above challenges, it was found that the most prominent reason a significant majority of receptionists gave for choosing their job is their love of human interaction and enjoyment of serving. Although many receptionists expressed a great desire to work in the hospitality industry because of their love of people and culture, the way the guests treated some of them proved frustrating and demotivating. A number of receptionists stated that, at some point, they planned to look for better opportunities and leave the industry.

The findings of this research provide insights into hotel receptionists' experiences for the relevant hotels and tourism stakeholders, including, academics, managers, the government, marketers, and policymakers.

Keywords: Experience Economy, co-creation, servicescapes, emotional labour, hospitality, tourism, developing countries, hotel reception, receptionist, front office, culture, customer citizenship behaviour, cognitive dissonance

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to the research

Tourism is a large industry (Chok, Macbeth, & Warren 2007; Hui, Wan, & Ho 2007; Kotler, Bowen, & Makens 2006; Scheyvens 2002), with its benefits extending to other sectors such as retail, transportation, and construction (Hui et al. 2007). In the year 2015, the United Nations World Tourism Organisation reported international tourism grew by 3.6%, and for four continuous years grew faster than other industries, accounting for 7% of the world's export (Simmons & Wilson 2015). By 2019, this had further grown to 4% with 1.5 billion international tourists travelling globally (UNWTO 2020). Developing countries are part of this growth in tourism. With this new trend in tourism, Azarya (2004, p. 951) noted an increasing number of visitors are "looking farther away in their search for the 'different', and so-called 'non-western' countries such as Africa, Asia, and Pacific regions, and these regions are increasingly becoming primary destinations". This increasing expansion into more economically and culturally diverse destinations adds complexity to the human interactions that underpin tourism as a service and experience-based sector.

A critical element of the tourism supply chain is the accommodation sector, where an entire travel experience can be ruined if guests are not satisfied with the accommodation experience (Ekiz 2009; Khoo-Lattimore & Ekiz 2014; Kotler et al. 2006). An accommodation experience for a guest begins during the decision-making process when accommodation is selected (from hotels, guest centres, and holiday homes), and the experience continues long after the visit, living on in the form of memories, photographs and, perhaps, souvenirs. One of the most popular forms of guest accommodation within the tourism supply chain are hotels (see Figure 1.1).

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Figure 1.1 Marriot Hotel Accra, Ghana

Source: <https://www.marriott.com/hotels/travel/accmc-accra-marriott-hotel>

The hotel (accommodation) sector is a vital part of the hospitality industry (Baker, Bradley, & Huyton 2000). The history of hotels can be traced from very modest beginnings where people opened their doors and homes to strangers and travellers to the now sophisticated modern structures and facilities, with many rooms (Bardi 2007; Gray & Liguori 2003; King 1995) (see Figure 1.2).

Within the hotel sector, studies have emphasised the importance of front-line staff to the overall guest experience. However, there are differences in the perception of what constitutes an exceptional guest experience, between the staff/managers and guests (Walls, Okumus, Wang & Kwun 2011); therefore establishing the (lack of) congruence between these views is necessary for a comprehensive understanding of guest experiences (Walls et al. 2011).

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Figure 1.2 Rock City Hotel Nkwatia, Ghana

Source: <https://rockcityhotelgh.com/>

There is limited empirical research related to the hotel experience, despite its recognised importance for business organisations in general (Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha 2009; Torres, Fu, & Lehto 2014; Walls et al. 2011). Much of this previous research into guest experiences has been predominantly focused on developed countries such as the United States of America, United Kingdom, New Zealand, Australia, Sweden, Hong Kong, Israel, and Norway rather than in the developing country context such as Ghana (Xu & Chan 2010; Knutson et al. 2009; Nasution & Mavondo 2008; Poria, Reichel & Brandt 2011; Walls et al. 2011; Walls 2013). At a finer-grained scale, research in the hotel sector in Ghana has focused on, for example, relationship marketing and guest loyalty (Amoako, Arthur, Christiana & Katah 2012; Narteh, Agbemabiese, Kodua & Braimah 2013), the use of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in hotel front office, (Ansah, Blankso, & Kontoh 2012) and yield management in the hospitality industry, (Boahen, Quansah & Sarpong 2013). There has been little to no research on the hotel reception experiences, specifically and most especially, within developing economies such as Ghana.

The hospitality sector is becoming a prime development target for hospitality multinational hotel chains expanding into Africa (Euromonitor International 2014, July; Oxford Business Group 2018) (see Figure 1.3 and Figure 1.4). Ghana is currently ranked in the top ten African countries for planned hotel rooms, with 1399 additional rooms being developed across eight hotels (Oxford Business Group 2018). This growth may be attributed to a booming travel and tourism industry, attractive investment climate, peace and political stability, backed with rich culture and hospitality of the people, and the recent discovery of oil in commercial quantities (Oxford Business Group 2018). Ghana, therefore, has become a preferred choice to tourists who want to travel to the West-African Sub-region or need to work (Oxford Business Group 2018). This growth in the hotel industry suggests the need for increased research attention on the overall hotel experience and into the hotel reception experiences, specifically.

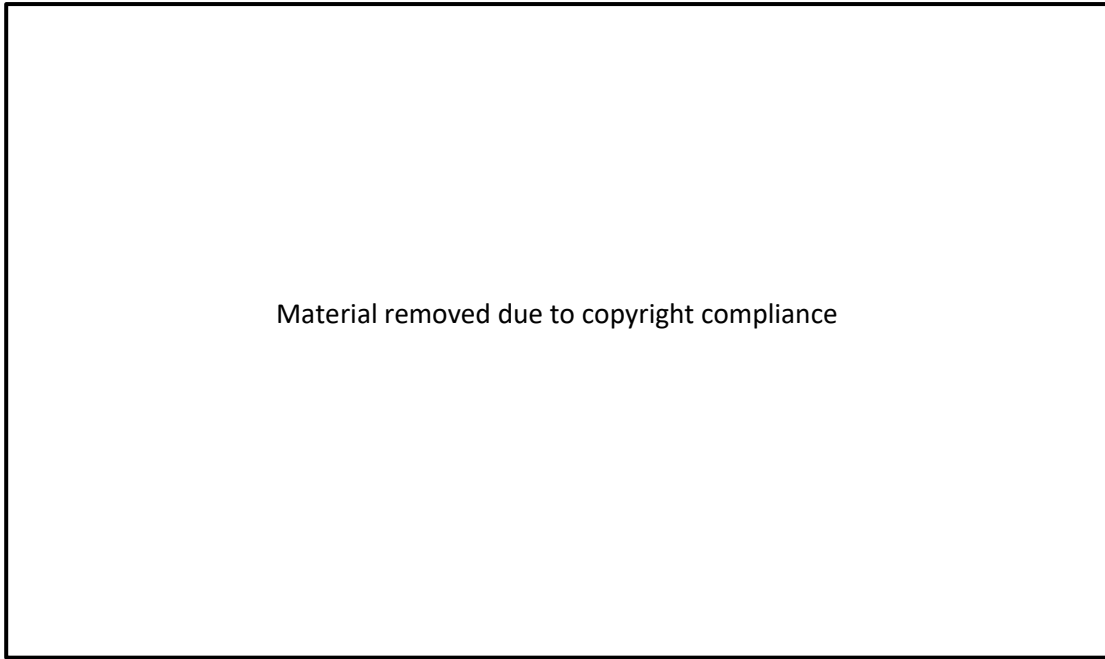


Figure 1.3 Kempinski Hotel Gold Coast City Accra

Source: <https://www.kempinski.com/en/accra/hotel-gold-coast-city/image-gallery/>)

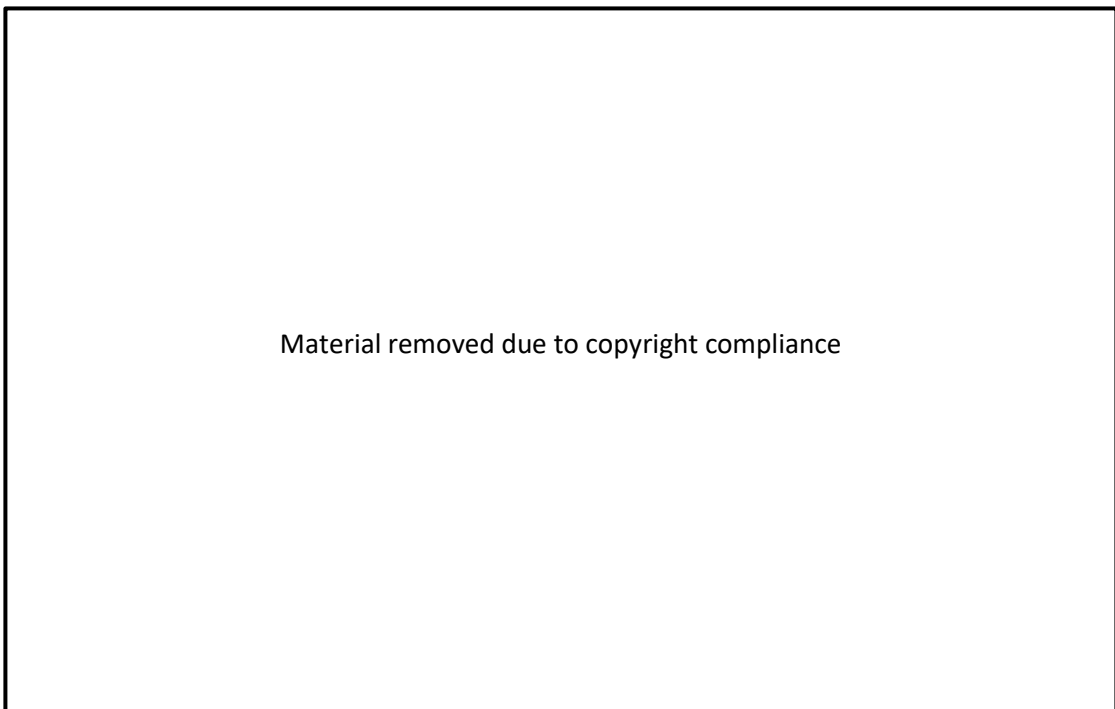


Figure 1.4 Mövenpick Ambassador Hotel Accra

Source: <https://www.movenpick.com/en/africa/ghana/accra/moevenpick-ambassador-hotel-accra/overview/>)

Given both these research and practical needs, the current study aims to critically investigate the hotel reception experience through identifying the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in this experience, in particular the guests, front office staff, and their managers. The study has been contextualised in the developing country of Ghana because of both the rapid increase in hotel experiences generated in developing countries and the likely new insights into service experiences that the additional complexity provides. As a foundation for the investigation, the concepts and theories of the experience economy, servicescapes, and co-creation were utilised to provide an overall framing of the study.

The concept of the experience economy is closely related to tourism, both in its origin and application (Morgan, Elbe & Esteban 2009). According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), the developed world has moved from an economy based on production to one based on service, but was undergoing a further shift towards an experience-based economy. Services, by contrast, were becoming commodities because consumers regarded them as homogenous and purchased them simply because of price, convenience, and availability.

According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), successful experiences are those that the customer finds unique, memorable and sustainable over time. They are experiences the customer would want to repeat and build upon and enthusiastically recommend to others. These experiences take place within the service setting, which is referred to as the servicescape (Bitner 1990).

The servicescape refers to the physical setting of the service firm. It includes a facility's aesthetics, layout accessibility, cleanliness, seating comfort, electronic equipment display, and ambience of the service environment (such as the use of light, colour, scent, temperature, noise, and music) - all of which might influence a guest's senses, and impact on their perception of their experiences (Bitner 1990; Rosenbaum 2005). The physical environment of a service setting is important to both the customers and the staff of the firm (Ariffin & Aziz 2012; Ariffin, Nameghi, & Zakaria 2013; Bitner 1992; Worsfold, Fisher, McPhail, Francis, & Thomas 2016). Given the place where services are delivered cannot be hidden from the customer, Bitner (1992) referred to it as the customer being 'in the factory' encountering the overall service within the organisation's physical facility. In the context of this study, hotel servicescapes are important because it is where experiences are co-created.

Co-creation, in the context of this research, refers to service experiences created by the consumer (i.e., guests) and staff (e.g., receptionists) in a particular context. It includes the immediate context (servicescape) but also the broader destination and cultural context (Payne, Storbacka, Frow, & Knox 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003). In co-creating service experiences, both staff and guest have

roles to perform (Carù & Cova 2006; Lugosi 2008), and their interaction is vital (Gronroos 1985; Grove, Fisk & Bitner 1992; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry 1985). Staff and guests interact with a service organisation to generate their own experience, bringing with them their own understandings of the situation, based on pre-existing expectations, attitudes, and beliefs, which relate to their motivations and culture (Chathoth, Altinay, Harrington, Okumus, & Chan 2013; Payne, et al. 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004).

These three theoretical perspectives (experience economy, co-creation, servicescape) have not been previously used together to understand reception experiences (which in themselves are relatively under-studied in hotel settings). This study, therefore, argues that guest experiences are co-created by the receptionist and the guest within the servicescape producing outcomes (satisfaction/dissatisfaction) for the parties involved. Most studies relating to hotels do not look concurrently at suppliers and consumers (demand and supply-side perspective); this study, by contrast, explicitly incorporates both sides of the process.

1.2 Research Aim/Questions

The literature widely recognises the importance of tourism to developing countries and the role of hotels in the tourism and hospitality industry with hotel guests becoming more discerning, demanding, diverse, and hedonistic (Erdly & Kesterson-Townes 2003; Van Boven & Gilovich 2003). The hospitality industry globally has been argued as impacted (both negatively and positively) by guest perceptions and requirements. This impact has made the industry change from physical product/service-focused business to an experience-focused one (Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha 2007) with leisure and hospitality businesses providing their guest with customised travel and hospitality experiences (Erdly & Kesterson-Townes 2003). The traditional service of offering board and lodging has now changed, and hotels are directing their efforts towards creating holistic experiential service events that connect individually with guests on an emotional and personal level to create a memorable experience (Bharwani & Jauhari 2013a). These experiences are, however, co-created with front-line employees being key resources used to gain competitive advantage (Lusch, Vargo, & O'Brien 2007) and emerge within the servicescape, where memorable experiences are created and consumed by the parties involved (Bharwani & Jauhari 2013a).

1.2.1 Main aim

The aim of this study is to investigate the hotel reception experience—and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in this experience—within a developing economy's (Ghana) context. To achieve this aim, four research questions were set;

1. a) What are the key elements of the hotel reception experience?

b) In what ways does the developing country context impact on these elements?
2. What are the expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience by different stakeholders (guests, staff, and managers)?
3. How do the different characteristics of key stakeholders influence their expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience (for example, culture, age, gender, and travel experience)?
4. What impact do hotel characteristics have on expectations and experiences of the hotel reception?

1.3 Conceptual Framework, pre-field work

The literature review presented in Chapter Three will focus on three main theoretical concepts: the experience economy, co-creation, and servicescapes, to understand the hotel reception experiences. Figure 1.5 depicts the proposed conceptual framework for this study, based on the review of literature on tourism and hospitality service experiences. Guests' experiences are complex and according to Ryan (2010), they are multi-phased, multi-influenced, and have multi-outcomes. Similarly, Larsen (2007) indicated guests' experiences are assessed as an accumulated and circulating process such as expectation, perceptions, and experience outcomes. These three aspects would accumulate and create guests' overall assessment and feelings toward the service experiences.

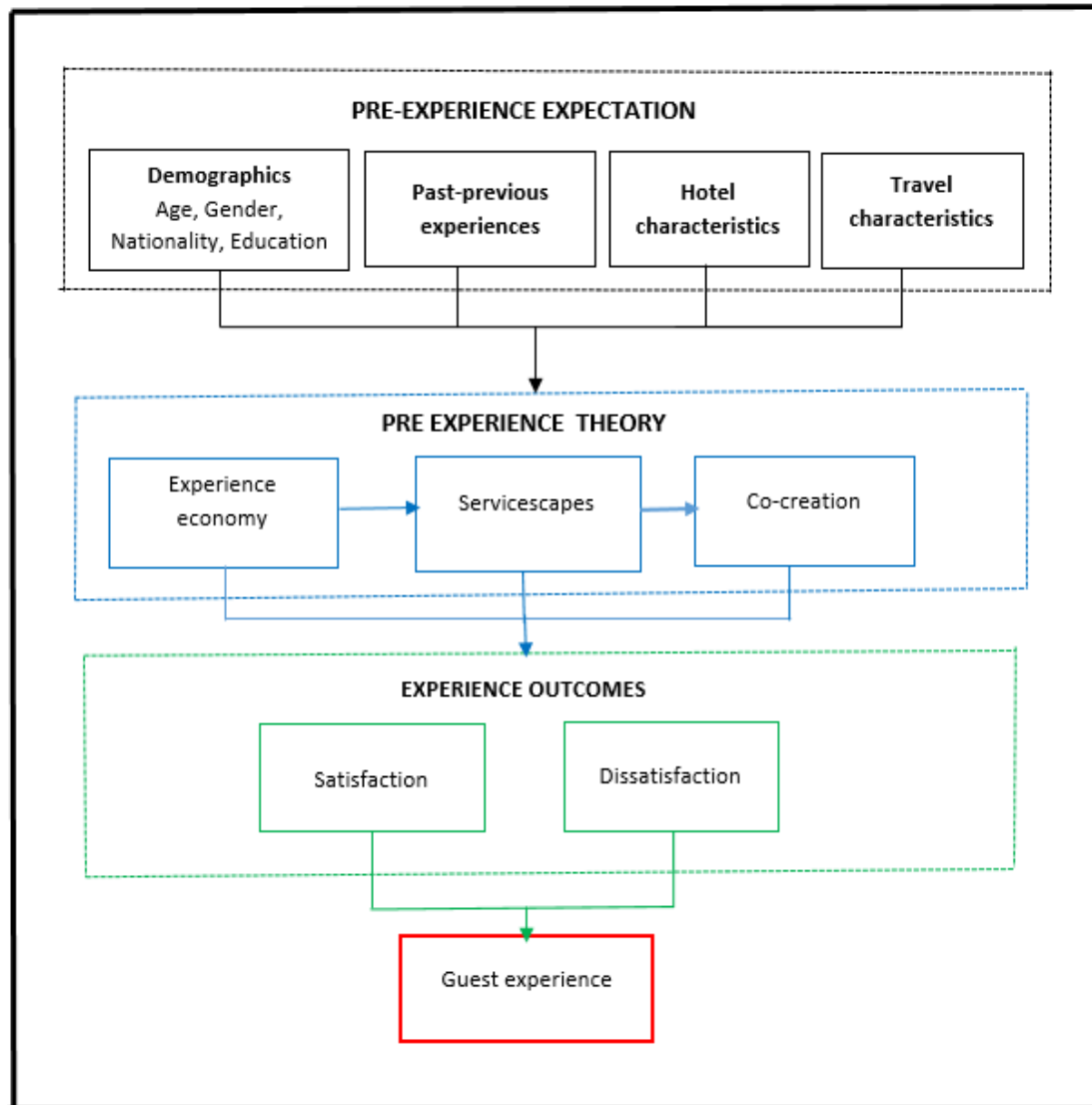


Figure 1.5 Conceptual Framework, Pre Field Work

The conceptual framework above (Figure 1.5) consists of three key components of guest service experience such as:

- Pre-arrival expectation
- arrival experiences
- experience outcome

The literature on guest experiences indicates that hotel guests have initial expectations which they bring to the hotel (section 3.3.4). Guest expectations might be influenced by their demographic characteristics such as age, gender and nationality; previous experiences with the hotel; the

characteristics of the hotel (international, domestic or star rating); and the travel characteristics of guests.

Guest arrival at the hotel marks the beginning of the second phase of the experience, the arrival experience. The arrival experience can be understood through the use of the three theoretical foundations used in this study for the delivery and consumption of the experience. The experience economy concept, which has its roots in drama terminology, describes how businesses focus on the creation of staged experiences. The production and consumption of these experiences also take place within a complex cultural context, shaped by the cultural experiences of the staff and guests and within a wider destination context.

Regarding the third phase of the experience, the experience outcome - an assumption of this study is that guests map expectations against what they encounter to judge the quality of their experience. Therefore, satisfaction in the context of hotels can be referred to as a function of pre-arrival expectations and post-service experiences (Chen & Chen 2010). While it provided a basis for designing the research approach, part way through the analysis this conceptual framework was disrupted by findings that were unexpected. A revised conceptual framework that resulted from this disruption is discussed in the next section.

1.4 Challenges of unexpected findings

This study was planned using a combination of the three bodies of theory (experience economy, servicescapes and co-creation) to understand the hotel reception experience in Ghana. These theories guided the design of the instruments and data collection (see Figure 1.5 for the conceptual framework). However, whilst gathering data in the field, there were unexpected findings. In order to incorporate the unexpected findings a new body of theory was required. Work on 'Emotional labour' (see Figure 1.6) was identified as providing the additional explanatory scope for the unexpected findings. The unexpected findings are set out in section 5.4.2 and the new theory is presented and applied in chapter Eight.

Chapters Nine and Ten build on the four bodies of theory (experience economy, co-creation of experience, servicescapes, and emotional labour) and incorporate both the expected and unexpected findings. Together the chapters provide discussion of the hotel reception experience from a developing country context of Ghana.

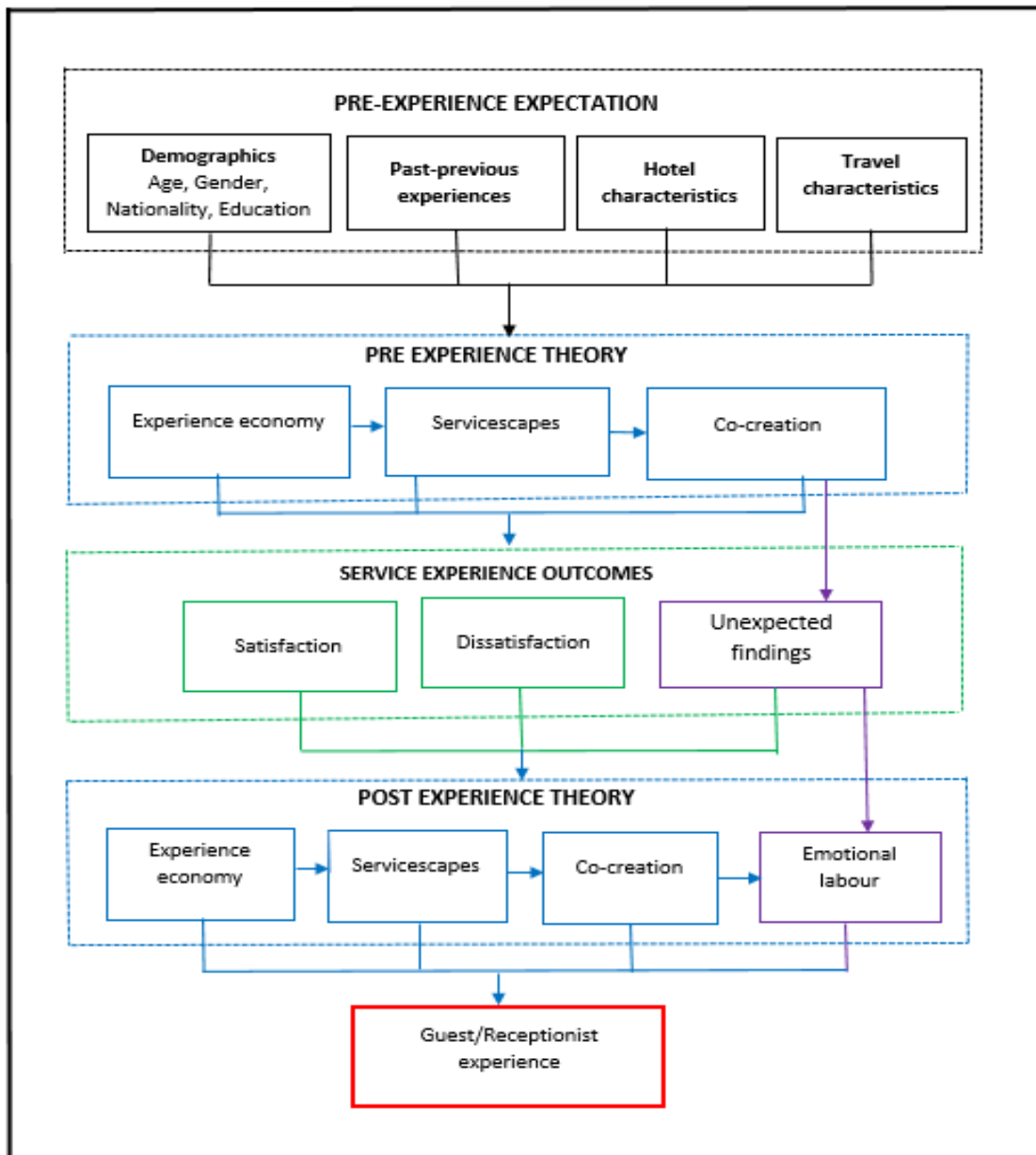


Figure 1.6 Conceptual Framework, Post Field Work

1.5 Research Approach

A mixed-method approach was adopted for this study. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for different respondent groups. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with a range of stakeholders (excluding guests). The purpose was to explore and understand the perceptions of stakeholders involved in the provision of hotel reception experiences, regarding their role and experiences of guests. At the same time, a structured self-completed questionnaire, with some open-ended questions, was used to explore the hotel reception experience from the perspective of the customer. The literature review informed the development of the interview guide and questionnaire.

The study was conducted within three, four and five-star international and domestic hotels in Accra, Ghana. The choice of these hotels is based on the rationale that they are *full-service hotels* and therefore provide an opportunity for more guest interaction at the hotel reception, while also offering the potential to explore how hotel characteristics (such as domestic versus international and star rating) influence reception experiences. These hotels also have fully functional and well-structured front offices, which is relevant to guest service experiences.

In total, eight hotels were involved in this study (one 5-star domestic hotel, two 4-star international hotels, two 4-star domestic hotels, two 3-star international hotels, and one 3-star domestic hotel). I adopted a purposive sampling method (Babbie 2016) in recruiting the participants. I interviewed 22 hotel receptionists, 10 Front Office Managers and six General Managers.

I coded data from completed questionnaires and entered it into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 23) database. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, mainly percentage, frequencies, mean and standard deviation, independent sample T-test and Chi-Square. I transcribed the interview data and used thematic content analysis for the qualitative data (see Chapter 4, section 4.4.1 for further details).

1.6 Significance of the study

This study contributes to the literature on hotel reception experiences in the context of hotel accommodation in a developing country (Ghana), with practical and theoretical implications for both developing and developed nations globally, for academics, practitioners, staff, managers and policymakers within the industry. The study brought highlights prominent features of reception experiences and guest expectations and perceptions (and satisfaction) and how such experiences are co-created. It provides both theoretical implications of reception and broader hotel experiences to advance hotel research and practice implications that could serve as a basis for training and education for both trainers and front-line staff within the industry.

1.7 Thesis organisation

Figure 1.7 outlines the organisation of the thesis and how each chapter is related. This thesis is comprised of ten chapters; **Chapter one** is the introductory chapter which provides the background and context of the study and presents the research aim and questions. It explains the rationale for the research undertaken to assess the hotel reception experiences in a developing country context from the perspective of stakeholders. The chapter also outlines the organisation of the thesis.

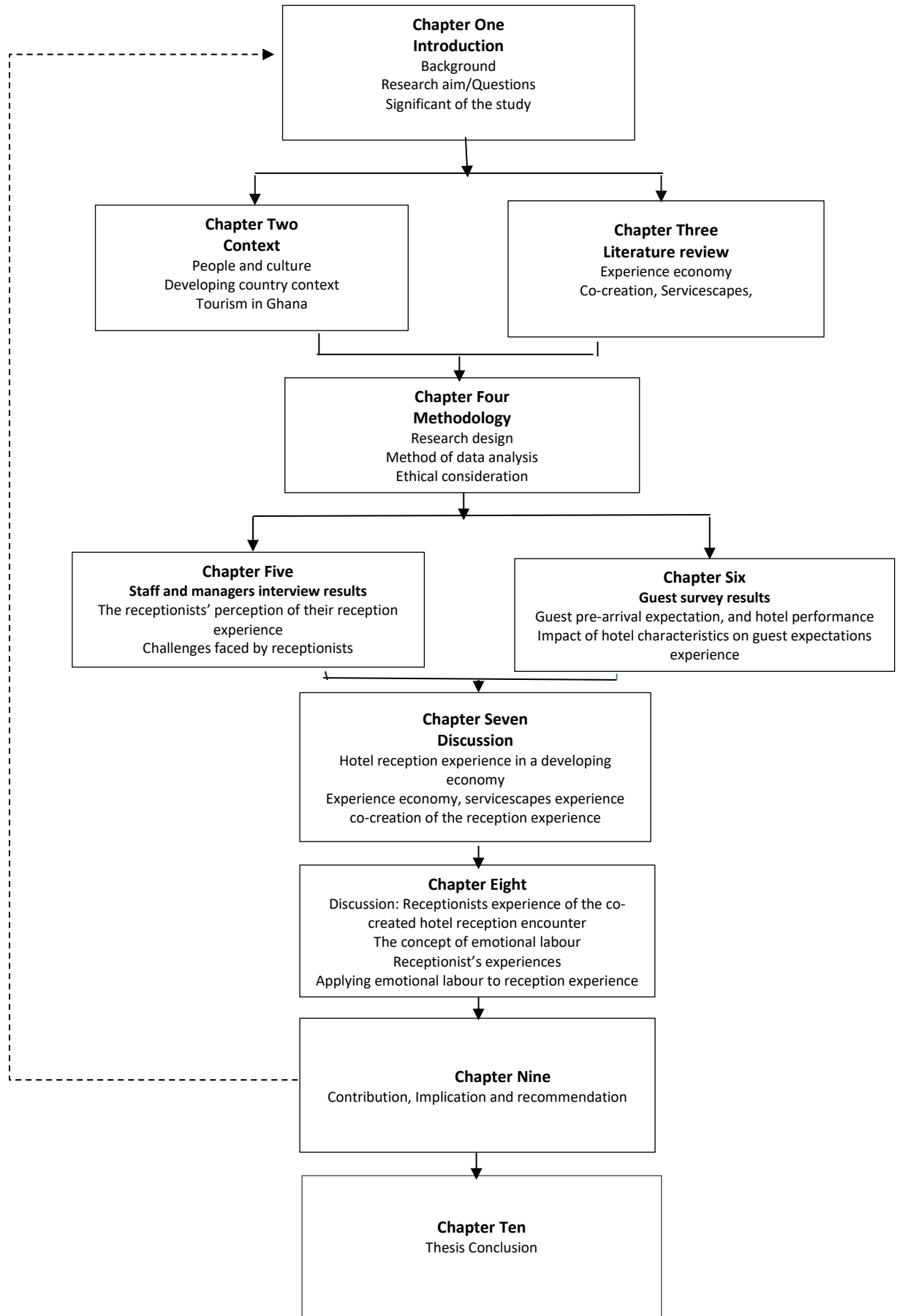


Figure 1.7 Thesis Organisation

Chapter two describes the context of the study through a relevant literature review. This chapter describes the general developing country context and, more specifically, Ghana's people and culture and the nature of tourism and hotels in Ghana. This context provides an understanding of the way of life of Ghanaians including cultural norms and institutions such as the extended family system. This provides an understanding of how cultural codes impact the lives of people and which consequently influences interactions even at the organisational level. The Ghanaian culture and work ethic have been partly influenced by the culture of the colonial people, the British. Nonetheless, there are certain cultural norms and practices which are specific to Ghanaians and form part of their daily lives and, by extension, impacts practices in the hotel industry.

Chapter three contains a review of the theoretical perspectives related to tourism and hotel experience. It discusses the concepts and theories of the experience economy, servicescape, and co-creation models which formed the theoretical foundation of the study. Further, the chapter describes the role of stakeholders in co-creating the reception experience.

Chapter Four discusses the research methodology and design and explains the choice of the mixed-method research approach as well as the justification for the specific methods used to address the research aim and questions. (A mixed-method design is comprised of a qualitative and quantitative core component with qualitative or quantitative supplementary component(s) (Morse 2016)). In addition, the chapter describes the research process such as characteristics of the population, the approach to sampling, research participants' profile and data collection methods. The chapter also discusses the method of data analysis, limitations and ethical considerations of the research.

Chapter Five reports the qualitative data obtained from the interviews with stakeholders. These data were analysed in accordance with the research questions of this thesis. It discusses the results of the research from the perspective of receptionists and managers. Staff play an important role in the service delivery and represent the culture of the destination. In addition, receptionists face the challenges of a cross-cultural context, and challenges related to the demands of the job of a receptionist.

Chapter Six reports the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire-based survey, as well as the qualitative data obtained from the open-ended questions. Both types of data are analysed in accordance with the research questions of this thesis. The chapter reports the hotel reception experience from the perspective of the guest as a consumer and an active participant in the delivery of the service. Experiences are co-created between guests and staff. The chapter focuses on the demographic and travel characteristics of hotel guests and their expectations and experiences. It also presents findings on the influence of socio-demographic and hotel characteristics on guest expectations and experiences.

Chapter Seven answers the research questions set out in section 1.2. This chapter discusses the significant findings from the study and explores some explanations for the findings, in the light of the literature. In this study—which aims to understand the hotel reception experiences in a developing country context—the theories of co-creation, servicescapes and the experience economy were used to guide the discussion of the findings as they relate to the research questions.

Chapter Eight discusses the unexpected yet significant results that emerged from the study during analysis. The front office staff were at times exposed to pressures which made their job challenging. These pressures arose from the demands of their job and challenges created by their face-to-face encounter with guests during the co-creation of the reception experience. While three theories—co-creation, servicescapes and the experience—economy guided the study it was found that the co-creation of the reception experiences created significant challenges for the receptionists. This prominent feature of the results is interpreted in this chapter using the additional theoretical concept of emotional labour.

Chapter Nine summarises the contributions and implications of this study. It emphasises a broad, theory-based understanding of hotel reception experiences, in the context of hotel accommodation in Ghana. This contribution has practical implications for other developing countries and global contexts. Particularly, for researchers, managers and policymakers within the industry. Significant issues raised from this research and recommendations for future research complete the chapter.

Chapter Ten, the final chapter, presents the conclusions of the thesis. Figure 1.7 outlines the organisation of the thesis and how each chapter is related.

Chapter 2

Context

2.1 Introduction

This chapter describes the specific context within which the study was undertaken. This sets the scene for this research by describing the people and culture of Ghana, including languages, family systems, behaviours, values, and symbols which identify the nation as one people. This discussion is important to the overall aim of this thesis as it helps to understand the culture and context in which the hotel reception experience is studied. The chapter further discusses the tourism industry in Ghana within the broader developing country context, given the impact of this context to the overall perception and experiences of the hotel reception.

2.2 People and culture

Ghana has a population of 29.77 million (The World Bank 2019). It is a multicultural nation, spanning a variety of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups. The year 2000 census estimated that Ghana's population consisted of over 100 different ethnic groups. What accounts for this diversity is the migration of ethnic groups from other places to settle on the land.

Regarding socio-economic groups, there are four types; the royals, upper, middle, and lower class, which is noticeable mainly in the urban areas. The upper class are generally referred to as the elite who live in the major cities. The upper-class show off their class, for example, by the vehicles they drive, the clothes they wear, and the size and location of their houses. Another class of Ghanaians are born into royal families, that is, families of paramount and regional chiefs, and people from such families are highly respected and given preferential treatment in many circumstances, even at work. Ghana has a huge middle class, and the rest belong to the lower class who work for relatively low wages (Global Affairs Canada 2018).

Regarding gender issues, traditionally men are dominant in Ghanaian society, holding power in community life and in most government positions. Traditionally, important decisions are usually made by men. Husbands are expected to provide for the family and care for the well-being of their wives and children. Wives are expected to respect their husband's authority in the household, care for the children and carry out the regular domestic chores, even though she may be gainfully employed outside the home (Global Affairs Canada 2018). Although with education and assertiveness, women are increasingly playing an important role in politics, government, academia, and other areas. Women

in Ghana are very entrepreneurial and independent. As a result, the commercial sector in Ghana is predominantly occupied by women (Global Affairs Canada 2018).

An integral part of the people of Ghana is their culture. Culture helps us to know about the past and present of a society. Hofstede (1994) defined culture as the unique behaviours and attitudes of a certain group of people that help distinguish one group from another, and norms acceptable in one culture might not be acceptable in other.

A particular society's culture is manifested in various ways, such as in its art, language and literature, music, and in all forms of religious and secular rituals (Hegarty & O'Mahony 2001). Culture comprises observable elements and non-observable elements. Observable elements in culture includes elements such as the characteristics of behaviour, material arts, food, language, and social arrangements. Non-observable elements include beliefs, attitudes, and values held by most people in a society (Sussmann & Rashcovsky 1997). Also included in the category of non-observable elements are expectations, role perceptions, memories, stereotypes, categorisations, evaluations, memories, and opinions (Sussmann & Rashcovsky 1997).

One of the prominent elements of the Ghanaian culture is language. Ghana is a multilingual country, with more than 250 languages and dialects spoken. All Ghanaians speak at least one local language indigenous to Ghana. Akan is the most widely spoken. However, English, which was inherited from the colonial era, is the official language and *lingua franca* and predominates in government and business affairs. It is also the standard language used for educational instruction (Embassy of Ghana The Hague 2019a). Ghanaian language and communications are rife with proverbs and euphemisms are common linguistic tools. If a foreigner wishes to make a good impression it is often advised to learn one or two greetings in the local language or *Twi* phrases, and incorporate them into conversations (Global Affairs Canada 2018). The foreigner might not get the pronunciation right, but the locals will highly appreciate the attempt. It demonstrates an interest in the country and the culture, which is highly impressive to Ghanaians.

One of the key cultural practices that identifies Ghanaians as a distinct people is the extended family system which is practised throughout Ghana. From a cultural perspective, the community is everything and Ghanaians share a powerful bond, which is evident throughout the country. An entire family shares any loss of honour, which makes the culture a collective one (Global Affairs Canada 2018).

According to Hofstede (2001) and Triandis (2001) collective cultures have a high power distance. (Power distance is a term that describes how people belonging to a specific culture view power

relationships. It refers to the relationship between those in power and the subordinates in a society where lower ranking individuals depending on the high or low power distance culture react to that authority (Hofstede 2001). Ghana, as a broadly collectivist nation and culture has been identified and classified as having a high-power distance. Cultural principles are respected with values oriented strongly towards respect for the elderly with relatively high collectivist standards (Abugre 2012). For people to protect this sense of face, there is a need to maintain harmony. People behave with decorum to ensure that they do not cause embarrassment to others (Global Affairs Canada 2018).

Ghanaians give great importance to clothing, which is a symbol of development and civilisation, as they care about how they dress. Clothing in Ghana is divided into two categories. The old generation wear traditional clothes and stick to these kinds of clothes, despite the influence of Western Style. On the other hand, the younger generation is influenced by universal fashion (Bernard 2009; University Studies Abroad Consortium 2017). Ghanaian national dress, kente cloth, is a source of common identity and pride. It is handwoven into intricate patterns from brilliantly coloured silk. Men drape it around their bodies, and women wear it as a two-piece outfit (Miller-Spillman, Lee, Graham, & Cho, 2016; Rovine 2001). (See Figure 2.1). Ghanaians choose suitable colours for their dresses since colours are very important and each colour has its special meaning. Every celebration has its specific clothes in specific colours. Happy occasions demand white, while funerals are filled with black or red. As for everyday apparel, colourful (and usually handmade) clothing fill the bustling crowds (Bernard, (2009).



Figure 2.1 The kente cloth of Ghana

Source: <https://www.pinterest.nz/pin/503418064592648595/>

Other fabrics which are important part of the Ghanaian dress code are 'Woodin' fabric, GTP (Ghana Textiles Products) fabric, and ATL (Akosmbo Textiles Limited) fabric, (see Figure 2.2 and Figure 2.3).

These fabrics are designed for all occasions, from work wear to special occasion attire. More than a decade ago, a move was made in Ghana to promote the wearing of traditional clothes at least once a week. Ghanaians were encouraged to don their local style on Fridays, which is termed '*Friday wear*'. "The National Friday Wear programme was launched in the Ghanaian capital of Accra on a Friday in November 2004" (Axelsson, 2021 p. 24). The idea was to promote 'made in Ghana' goods and to show cultural pride. Hotel staff in Ghana also often wear the national attire, not only on Fridays but all week, as in the case of domestic hotels in Ghana as this study found (Axelsson, 2021) (See Chapter Five, section 5.2.2.1 and Chapter Six, section 6.6).

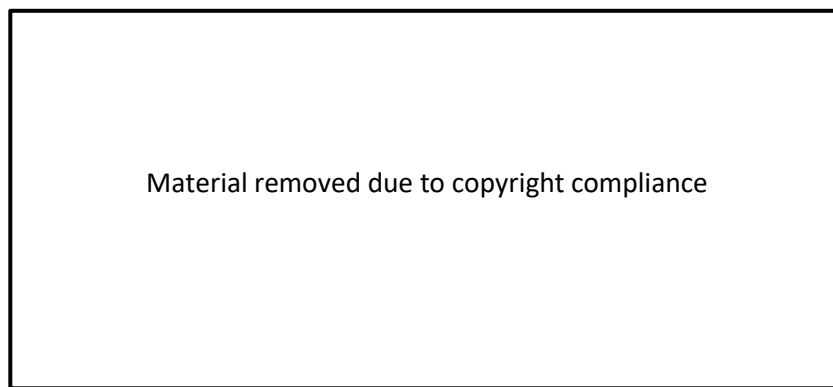


Figure 2.2 Ghana Textile Products fabrics (GTP).

Source: <https://www.urbanstax.com/stock-gtp-fabric>



Figure 2.3 Woodin Fabrics

Source: <http://www.woodinfashion.com>

Ghanaian art forms an important part of the culture of the country and includes music, drumming, dancing, graphic art, carving, sculpture, and symbols of national importance.

Music themes are related to happiness, sorrow and war. Ethnic traditional music is usually played during festivals, funerals, and to entertain tourists. One aspect of Ghanaian music is drumming. Drumming is important to carry messages such as sounds of proverbs, praise songs through a specialised drum language. The most popular traditional and primitive instruments used in Ghanaian music include wooden 'atenteban flutes,' 'balafon xylophones' and various types of drums such as 'the talking drum' (Anku 2009; Coffie 2020; Wiggins 1999) (See Figure 2.4).



Figure 2.4 The Talking Drum in Ghana (locally known as *frontonfrom*)

Source: <https://www.pinterest.nz/pin/295478425542900056/>

Ghanaian music and dance performances were traditionally held in the context of religious or political rites. They were also part of wedding ceremonies, initiation ceremonies, and other social situations. Today, while music and dance continue to serve these purposes, they also symbolise the country's culture. Such performances are part of cultural festivals, and public occasions and are also performed in front of tourists (see Figure 2.5) (Coffie (2020; Emielu 2011; Compassion 2016; Countries and their Culture 2019; Nag 2019).

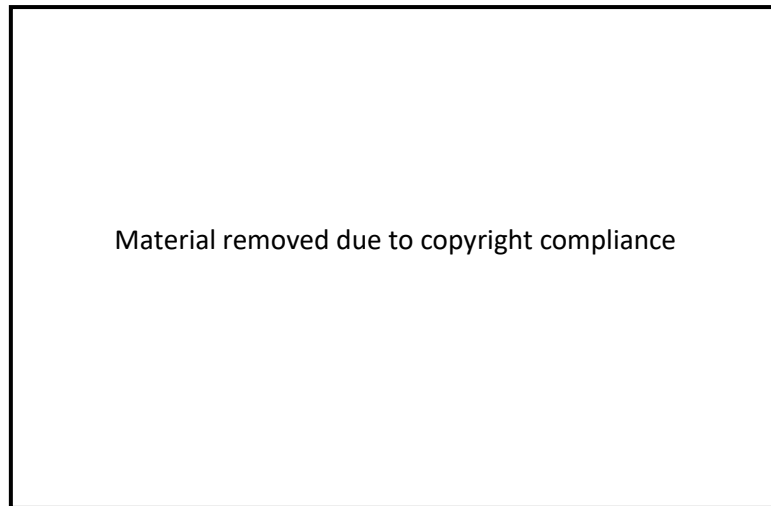


Figure 2.5 Ghanaian Dance (locally known as Kete from the Ashanti's)

Source: <https://omgvoice.com/lifestyle/meaning-gestures-kete-dance>
<https://www.pinterest.nz/pin/34902965834588449/>

Ghana is known for a rich tradition of graphic arts. Wood carving is perhaps the most common. The focus of the craft is on the production of stools that are carved whole from large logs to assume the form of abstract designs or animals (see Figure 2.6). These motifs generally represent proverbial sayings. The stools are not merely mundane items but become the repositories of the souls of their owners after death, and objects of family veneration (Countries and their Culture 2019).

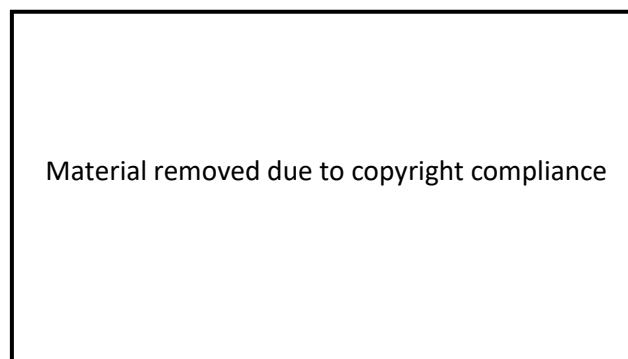
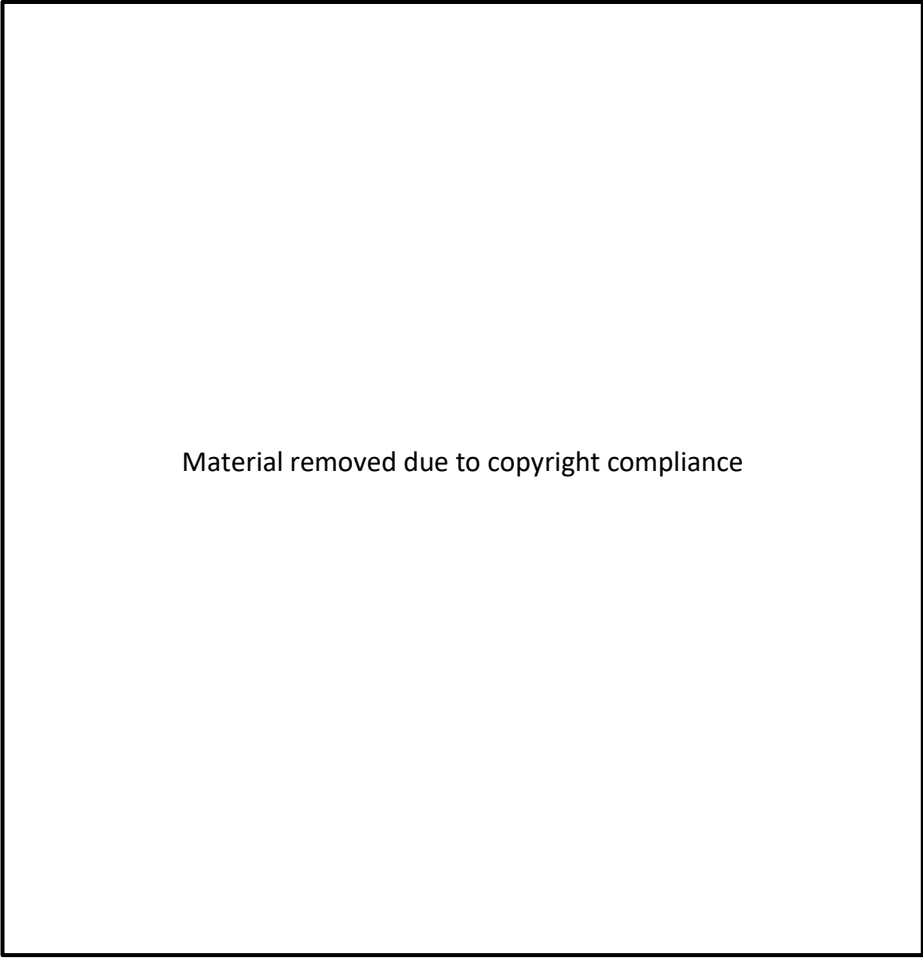


Figure 2.6 Wood carved stools.

Sources: <https://www.market.unicefusa.org/p/fair-trade-wood-sculpture-of-sankofa-bird/U166303/>

Carving is also applied to the production of staves of the traditional office, dolls, and game boards. Sculpting in metal, and bronze and iron casting techniques are used to produce gold weights and ceremonial swords. Pottery is otherwise devoted to making simple domestic items. These objects are used as decorative pieces in homes and offices, including hotels (Ayiku 1998) (see Figure 2.7).



Material removed due to copyright compliance

Sources: <https://www.market.unicefusa.org/p/fair-trade-wood-sculpture-of-sankofa-bird/U166303/>
<https://www.pinterest.de/pin/376965431301133320/>

Regarding symbolism, Ghana's most distinctive emblems originated in the nationalist movement. The most prominent is the black star, which evokes black pride and power and a commitment to pan-African unity, which were central themes for mobilising resistance against British rule. Other symbols derived from the Akan traditions have become incorporated into the national culture. These include the ceremonial sword, the linguist's staff, the chief's stool, and the Adinkra symbols (see Figure 2.8) (Ayiku 1998; Countries and their Culture 2019; Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Appiah, Nartey 2016).

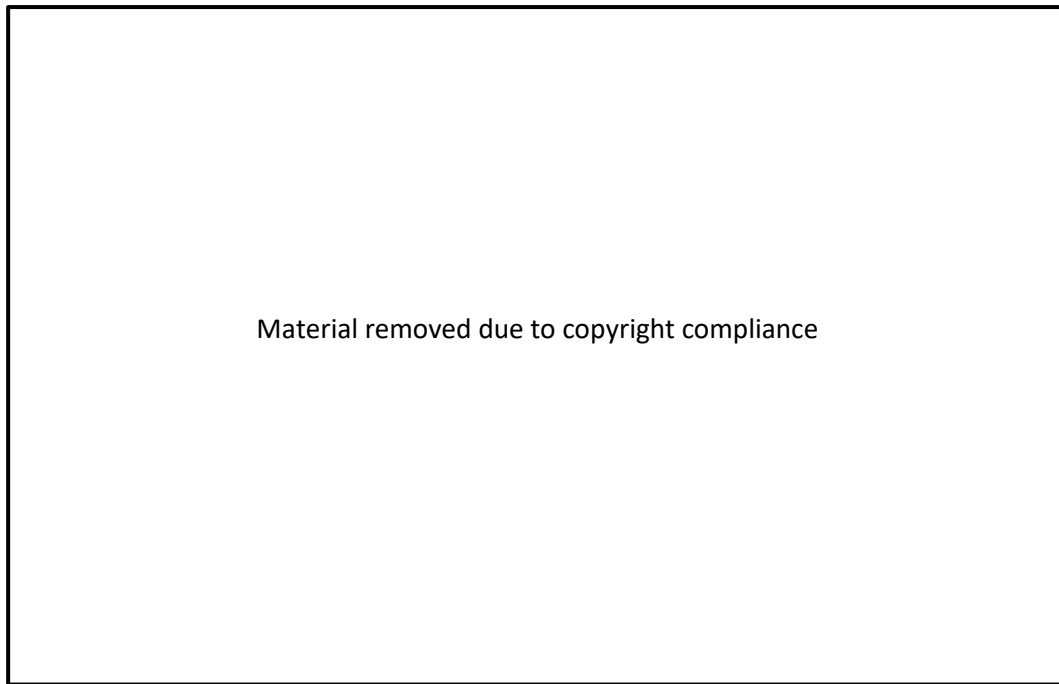


Figure 2.8 Adinkra symbols

Source: Kuwornu-Adjaottor, Appiah, Nartey (2016)

<http://www.nomadcreativeconsultancy.com/oware-1>

The Ghanaian culture cannot be described without mentioning religion. The constitution of Ghana provides for the freedom of religion since Ghana is home to a mixture of diverse religions (Countries and their Culture 2019; Nkrumah-Pobi & Owusu-Afriyie 2020; Kwintessential 2019). Religious tolerance in the country is relatively high, allowing people to practice whatever faith or tradition they desire. Religion forms part of the Ghanaian culture and is responsible for many of the beliefs and traditions. Christianity is the largest religion in Ghana, with approximately 72% of the population being members of various Christian denominations as per the 2010 census (Kwintessential 2019). The major Christian celebrations of Christmas and Easter are recognised as national holidays in Ghana (Countries and their Culture 2019). Catholicism exists because of the European conquest.

Additionally, nearly 18% of Ghanaian citizens practice some form of Islam. Islam is very wide-spread in the north of the country; its influence comes from those people who left Mali and settled in Ghana. Ramadan, the Islamic month of fasting, is observed by Muslims in Ghana. God or Allah is constantly referred to in conversation, proverbs, greetings and explanation of natural events (Nkrumah-Pobi & Owusu-Afriyie 2020; University Studies Abroad Consortium 2017). The traditional faiths (Indigenous religious beliefs) are practised by five per cent of the population, whilst 6.2% of the population

includes those who have no religious beliefs. There is also a strong belief in Sorcery and Superstitions among the Ghanaian population (Nag 2019).

In Ghanaian culture religious beliefs and rituals are very significant and play a major role and affect every area of daily activity including working, dancing, travelling as well as eating and drinking. Religious roles are revealed during festivals in which people prepare some activities that renew and strengthen relations with their ancestors (see Figure 2.9) (Ayiku 1998; Global Affairs Canada 2018; Nkrumah-Pobi & Owusu-Afriyie 2020).

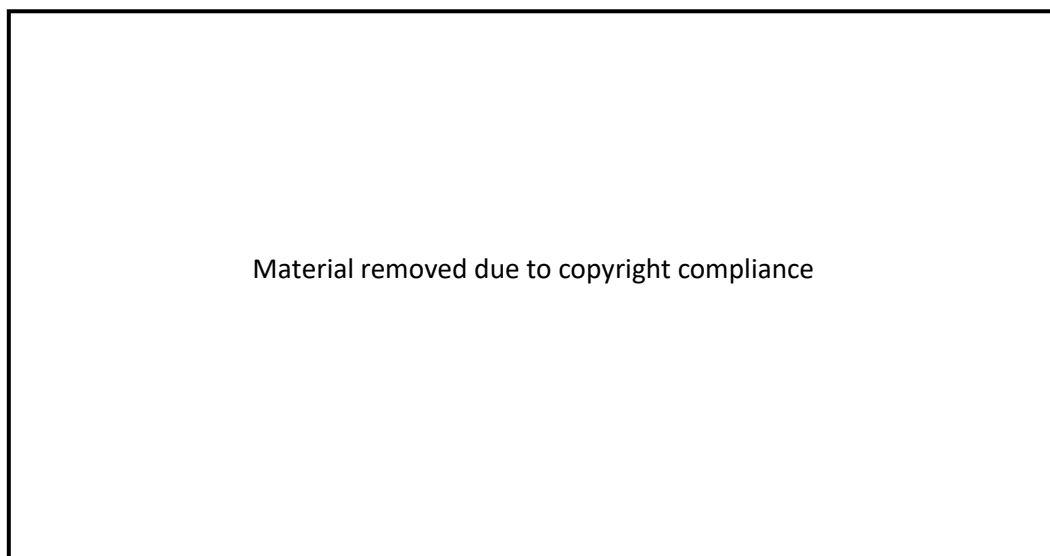


Figure 2.9 A Festival scene in Ghana

Source: <https://yen.com.gh/142787-festivals-ghana-list.html>

2.3 Ghanaian hospitality and interactions

Ghanaian are hospitable and friendly, and this has led to a term which is known as Ghanaian hospitality (Ghana Celebrities.com 2013; Ghana Web Retrieved, 16 February 2018; Richards 2005). Ghanaians are well-known for their warmth, generosity, and vigorous welcome of family, friends, and strangers. (Embassy of Ghana The Hague 2019b; Nag 2019). ‘*Akwaaba*’, which means welcome is usually the very first word a visitor will hear upon arriving at Kotoka International Airport, Accra. (The Travelling Sociologist 2017). Akwaaba is also inscribed on decorative art pieces which are displayed in homes and offices to welcome visitors, for example, the Akwaaba portrait (see

Figure 2.10). Ghanaians are open, and can easily engage in conversation with someone who is new to the county (Global Affairs Canada 2018; The Travelling Sociologist 2017). Ghana is a developing economy, and the next section discusses in details.

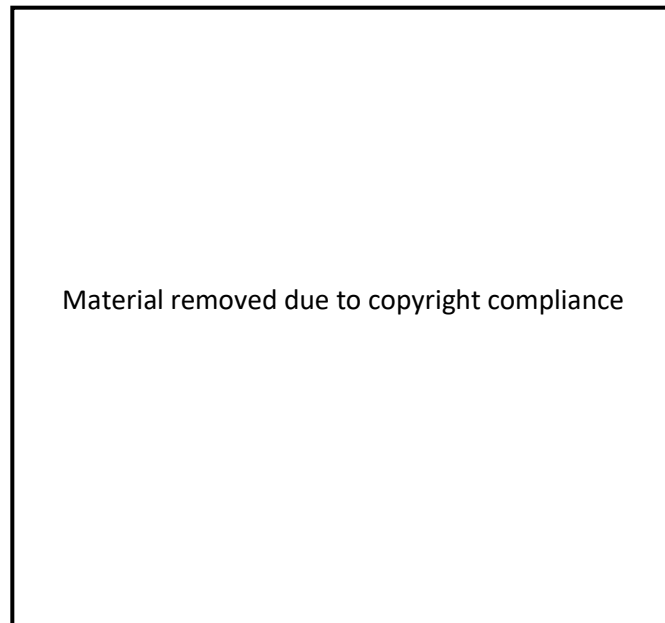


Figure 2.10 The 'Akwaaba' portrait

Source: <https://trixybea.wordpress.com/2013/04/09/akwaaba-the-symbolism-of-the-proverbial-ghanaian-hospitality/>

2.4 Developing country context

One of the ways the World Bank groups countries (economies) is according to Gross national income (GNI) per capita (Serajuddin & Hamadeh 2020). For the current 2020 fiscal year; a) low income economies are defined as those with a GNI per capita of \$1,036 or less; b) lower-middle economies are those with a GNI per capita between \$1,036 and \$4,045; c) upper-middle economies are those with GNI per capita between \$4,046 and \$12,535; and d) high-income economies are those with a GNI per capita of \$12,535 and more (Serajuddin & Hamadeh 2020). The GNI per capita of Ghana is \$2,220 which makes it a lower-middle economy (The World Bank 2020a).

This study is situated in a developing country context. When GNI per capita is used developing countries are commonly defined as those with low, lower-middle, or upper-middle income (Rouvinen 2006; Serajuddin & Hamadeh 2020; Todaro & Smith 2012). As compared with developed countries, developing countries are characterised by having lower levels of living and productivity, lower levels of human capital, health, education and skills, higher levels of inequality and absolute poverty, higher population growth rates, and greater social, ethnic fractionalisation (Todaro & Smith 2012). Larger rural populations but rapid rural-to-urban migration also characterise developing countries. There is also lower levels of industrialisation and manufactured exports, adverse geography, underdeveloped markets, lingering colonial impacts and unequal international relations and external dependence. These are essentially historical, and economic commonalities among developing countries that have led to economic development problems (Todaro & Smith 2012, p. 56) in these countries.

Tourism is an important part of the economy of developing countries and has been a vital part of economic development strategies in these countries (Ashley & Mitchell 2009; Chok, et al. 2007; Roe & Urquhart 2001; Scheyvens & Momsen 2008). Tourism generates foreign exchange for developing countries (Neto 2003) and, according to Ashley and Mitchell (2009), international tourists spend significantly more than development agencies spend in developing countries. For example, in 2018, 1.4 billion international tourists travelled abroad generating USD 1.7 trillion (UNWTO 2019, 2019) and out of this a remarkable 45.4% of these journeys ended in developing country destinations (UNWTO 2019). Ashley and Mitchell (2009) suggested that tourism is as significant as manufacturing, and much more important than mining, when it comes to export earnings in developing countries. For example, Africa's share of global tourism was 67 million, generating USD 38 billion (UNWTO 2019, 2019). According to Neto (2003, p. 214), citing (UN 1999a), tourism is, however, the only major service sector in which developing countries have consistently recorded trade surpluses relative to the rest of the world.

Ghana has moved from an agricultural to an industrial economy. Then later it moved from an industrial economy to a service-based economy. Tourism has contributed tremendously to the service-based economy (see section 2.5 below). There is a gradual shift of emphasis from primary commodities to a market-oriented economy in Ghana, with attention being given to the hospitality and tourism industries in general. It is often claimed that the hospitality industry is directly associated with the cultural, economic, and intellectual potential of the country (Bokpin & Nyarko 2009).

The development of tourism and hospitality brings along significant issues and particular challenges to developing countries including inequalities and conflicts, lack of empowerment and participation in tourism, and foreign investors' domination of local development (Akama & Kieti 2007; Hall 2007).

Tourism and hospitality development in developing countries have resulted in inequality and conflicts between international tourists and local residents as a result of the mismatch and miscommunication between tourism developers (both in the private and public sector) and marginalised local residents (Akama & Kieti 2007; Roe & Urquhart 2001). This “denotes the material and socio-economic differences between affluent tourists staying in high-class resort hotels and economically deprived and marginalised residents living in slum environment” (Akama & Kieti 2007, p. 740). According to Roe and Urquhart (2001) tourism development is noted for high levels of revenue ‘leakage’ and even the revenue that is retained in the destination country is captured by the rich or middle-income groups, not the poor.

There is also the issue of lack of local empowerment and participation in tourism. It is generally accepted that the development of tourism creates employment and business opportunities for both local communities and investors in developing countries because of its labour intensiveness (Akama & Kieti 2007; Ashley, Boyd, & Goodwin 2000; Roe & Urquhart 2001). In some developing countries, the local people tend to occupy unskilled service and low paying positions such as waiters, porters, security guards. Whereas the highly paid job positions, for example, supervisory and managerial, are occupied by migrants (Akama & Kieti 2007; Ashley, et al. 2000; Scheyvens 2002). As an example, in Ghana migrants occupy most of the top managerial positions such as the General Manager in the hospitality industry, while the receptionists are Ghanaians (see Chapter Five, section 5.2.2). In a developing country of Ghana, receptionists are paid 700 to 1200 Ghana Cedis (181.13 – 315.65 NZD) per month while the average rate of a hotel room per night is 900 to 2,700 Ghana Cedis (236.74 – 710.21 NZD) which is nearly equal to what receptionists earn in a whole month. Mbaiwa (2005) is of a similar opinion that tourism can serve as a form of internal colonialism, where tourism resources in a community benefit foreigners, compared to the majority of their local community counterparts who derive insignificant or no benefit.

2.5 Ghana as a destination

Ghana is located along the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean in the sub-region of West Africa. Ghana occupies an area of 238,540 km² and is bordered by three Francophone countries, Ivory Coast in the west, Burkina Faso in the north, Togo in the east, and the Gulf of Guinea and the Atlantic Ocean in the south (refer to Figure 2.8) (Abugre 2012; Countries and their Culture 2019; Embassy of Ghana The Hague 2019; The World Bank 2019). The southern coast of Ghana lies 748 km north of the equator, and the Greenwich Meridian passes through the port city of Tema, which is 26 km east of Accra (Salm & Falola 2002). Ghana’s current borders were established in the 1900s as the British Gold Coast but became independent of the United Kingdom on 6th March 1957 (Abugre 2012; UNDP 2016; The World

Bank 2017). Until its independence, Ghana was known as the Gold Coast. It was renamed Ghana, meaning 'Warrior King,' to reflect the ancient Ghana Empire that flourished in West Africa during the 10th century (Compassion 2016). Ghana was the first country to gain independence after 100 years of British colonial rule in 1957. Ghana is one of the most stable democracies in Sub-Saharan Africa (Keller 1995; Koku 2001; Mbaku 1994; Zeleza 2009). Ghana has received positive ratings from respected world institutions such as the World Bank, IMF, UNO, etc. as the most stable democratic country in Sub-Saharan Africa for the past couple of decades (Abugre 2012).

Ghana's growing economic prosperity and democratic political system have made it a regional power in West Africa. Agriculture (cocoa and timber) has contributed immensely to the economy of Ghana, as well as other sectors such as mining (gold, bauxite, and manganese), foreign remittances, and tourism. In 2009, Ghana discovered oil in commercial quantities and is currently an oil-producing country. This production of oil has increased the export earnings of the country, which has enhanced the gross national income (Abugre 2012). Ghana has a diverse geography and ecology which ranges from coastal savannahs to tropical jungles. Annual rainfall in Ghana is heavier in the south than in the northern part of the country, and its characteristics determine the most dominant crop in a particular ecological zone. The southern areas, especially the Ashanti region, produce most of the country's cocoa, minerals, and timber (FAO 2015). The elevation of the northern part of the country varies from 91 to 396 metres (299 to 1,299 ft) above sea level, and the vegetation is composed of low bush, park-like savannah and grassy plains.

At the time of doing this study, there were ten political and administrative regions in the country (refer to Figure 2.11). These were established in 1987.



Figure 2.11 The regional map of Ghana

Source: <https://www.worldatlas.com/maps/ghana>

The study was done in Accra; the largest city and the national capital of Ghana (the seat of government). Accra is the gateway to Ghana and covers an area of 185 km², with a population of 1.594 million (World Bank 2010). Accra is multicultural and the business hub for locals and internationals.

Ghana has been subjected to social forces, colonisation and economic restructuring over the years. This has had on-going implications for business organisation and service industries such as hospitality and tourism, which is discussed next.

2.6 Tourism in Ghana

Ghana has become a tourism and business hub in West Africa over recent decades. Ghana's tourism assets offer opportunities for the development of ecotourism, cultural and heritage tourism, conference and business tourism, and leisure tourism. The tourism sector in Ghana is presently one of the fastest growing sectors of the economy (Adu-Ampong 2017; Mensah-Ansah, Martin, & Egan 2011). Tourism is currently Ghana's 4th foreign exchange earner after cocoa, gold and foreign

remittances (Graphic Online 2014; Mensah-Ansah, et al. 2011). “The tourism industry has over the years demonstrated its ability to contribute significantly towards national economic development, especially in the areas of employment generation, wealth creation, and poverty reduction at national and community levels” (Mensah-Ansah, et al. 2011, p. 157).

Tourism in Ghana is an all year phenomenon, and the destination continues to attract international tourists (Akyeampong & Asiedu 2008). Ghana has considerable and diverse tourism assets which are usually categorised into four sectors: 1) natural attractions; 2) historical heritage; 3) cultural heritage, and 4) other attractions. Ghana’s tourism product across the country is predominantly natural resource-based (Frimpong-Bonsu 2015). Examples are the safaris/wildlife conservation parks, lakes, rivers, waterfalls, beaches and coastlines, the estuary, the first cocoa farm in the country, a monkey sanctuary, the Nzulezo stilt settlement (for humans where an entire village sits on water), and Shai Hills resource reserve. Kakum and Mole national parks are the most developed but Kakum has become the best known tourism attraction in Ghana because of its canopy walkway and proximity to Cape Coast (Frimpong-Bonsu 2015; The Financial Times 2019).

There are other man-made products and historical and religious sites in Ghana, such as forts and castles along the coast, traditional buildings, mosques, churches, and major shrines. Two of which are properties on the UNESCO World Heritage Site: Cape Coast castle, and Asante traditional buildings. The forts and castles are over 500 years old and played a significant part in the transatlantic slave trade. The traditional buildings include shrines, courtyards, and Adinkra symbols that illustrate ideas and beliefs of ancient Asante (see Figure 2.7) (Frimpong-Bonsu 2015; United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization 2019). These historical assets provide opportunities for cultural heritage tourism. In particular, the large African diaspora in the Americas and the Caribbean have a natural affinity for understanding and experiencing Ghanaian history, through music cultural heritage, arts and film scenes (Frimpong-Bonsu 2015; The Financial Times 2019).

Ghana can also boast of its rich culture, traditions and festivals which are diverse across all the ethnic groups and the ten regions in the country. The vibrant customary life in Ghana includes; a) many festivals, such as Adaye Kese, Homowo, Odwira, Aboakyir, Hogbestosto, and Damba; b) music, dances, traditional attire, decorations, and cultural artefacts. These promote traditional authorities and customary life (Easy Track Ghana 2019; Ghana Tourism Authority 2016). These provide opportunities for cultural tourism all over the country. Such attractions are considered “sources of national pride” which are the most visited destinations in Ghana according to Ghana Tourism Authority (Frimpong & Deichmann 2017, p. 286).

In 2019 1.5 billion tourists travelled globally, a 4% increase on the previous year (United Nations World Tourism Organization 2020). There has been a progressive growth of tourism in Ghana, particularly in the number of tourist arrivals and the amount of money generated. The number of international tourists to Ghana increased, reaching a record of 944 million arrivals. Sub-Saharan Africa's share of total global tourists remains small at 3.3% but the region ranks high in average annual tourism growth. Figure 2.12 shows the steady growth of international tourist arrivals and expenditure in Ghana for a decade.

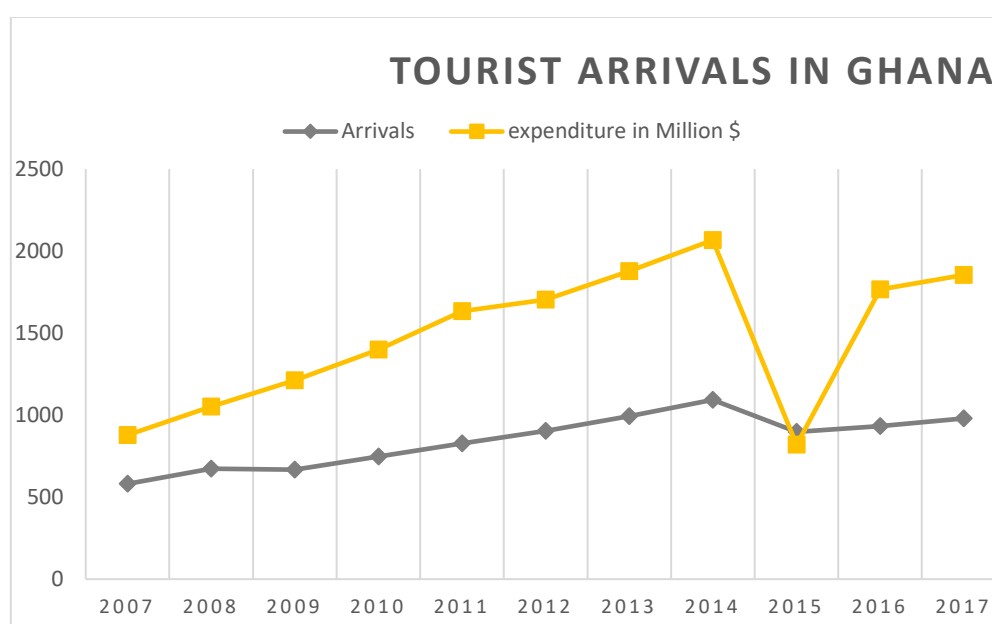


Figure 2.12 Tourist Arrivals in Ghana

Source: International Tourist Arrivals and receipts Author's computation using data from The World Bank (2020); Ghana Statistical Service (2017); Ghana Tourism Authority (2016).

International tourism is one of the expanding links between developed economies and the developing economies (Pearce 1989) and underscoring the industry's potential contribution toward achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG), such as goal one which states 'end poverty in all forms' and goal five which states 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls (Assembly 2015; Ihimaera-Smiller 2020).

International tourists come to Ghana from all parts of the world. Ghana receives international tourists from five major regions: Africa, North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia/Oceania (Frempong & Deichmann 2017). Ghana has become a destination for tourists around the world who seek to either get away from the stress of work, spend time with friends and family or change their natural

environments or do business. The statistics suggest that the leading sources for international visitors to Ghana are the United States of America (28%), United Kingdom (19%) and Nigeria (18%) as indicated in Figure 2.13 World Travel and Tourism Council (2020).

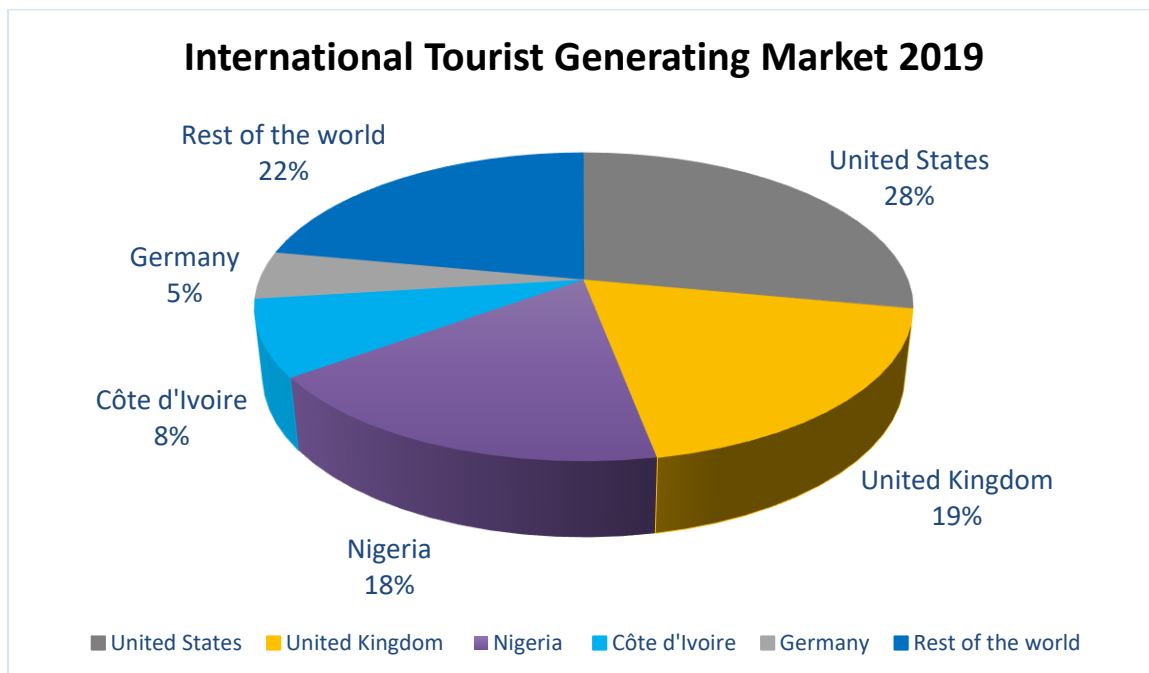


Figure 2.13 international Tourists generating markets

Source: Authors computation with data from World Travel and Tourism Council (2020)

The motivations of international tourists to Ghana are varied (see Figure 2.14). Nonetheless, a 2009 report of the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) shows that the main purposes of visits for 40% of arrivals are professionally related travel—businesses, conferences, study and training. Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) is the second most important travel motivation (25% of arrivals) with leisure holiday travel coming in as a third main purpose with 19% of arrivals. In recent times, there are increasing efforts at developing and encouraging the domestic tourism market (Cobbinah & Darkwah 2016; Frempong & Deichmann 2017).

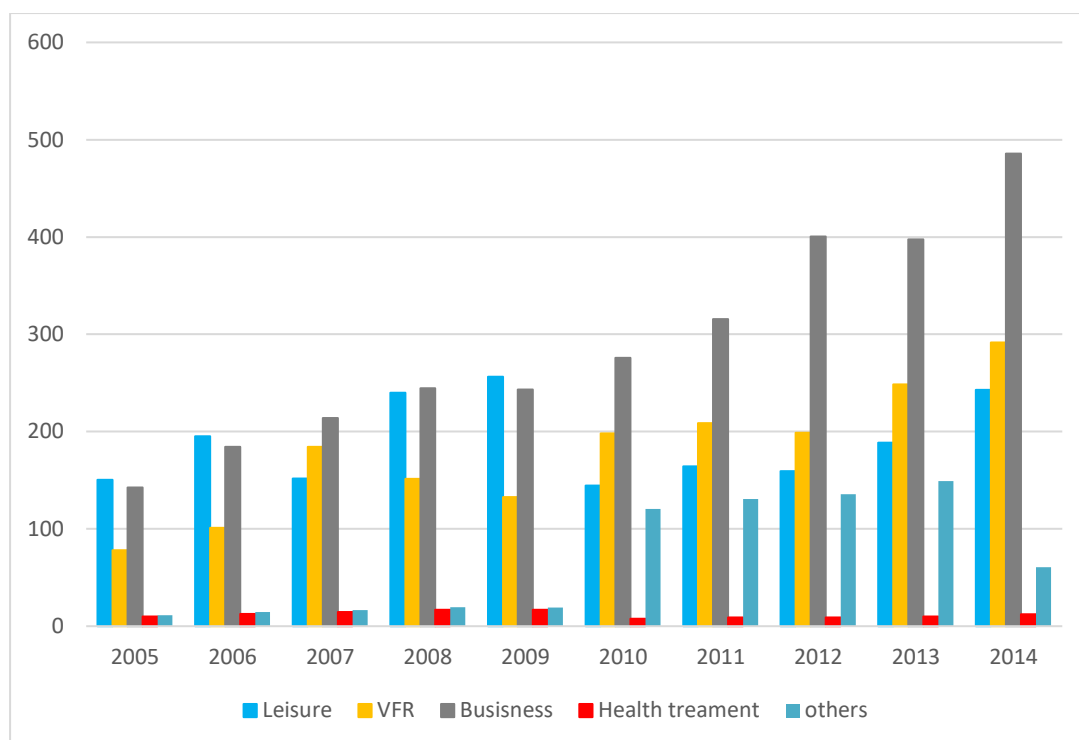


Figure 2.14 International Tourist Arrivals by Purpose of Visit (2005-2014).

Source Authors computation using data from Ghana Statistical Service (2017).

Globally, tourism has generated employment opportunities for residents of tourists' destinations. The government of Ghana recognises the potential benefits of international tourism and has accordingly made the industry development a priority. The reason is the tourism industry serves as a means of economic growth (Mensah-Ansah, et al. 2011).

Tourism and hospitality industries create many employment opportunities in different areas, such as accommodation, transportation, and attractions sites (Aynalem, Birhanu, & Tesefay 2016). Ghana has also benefited from jobs created by tourism. In 2019 travel and tourism in Ghana were directly responsible for more than 623,000 jobs in hotels, travel agencies, airlines, and other transportation services (5.2% of total employment). Averaging about 5% (USD 3,305.1MN) of Ghana's GDP, tourism contributes significantly to the economy.

The primary needs of tourists at a destination are accommodation, food and beverage, transport facilities and entertainment and recreation services (Mensah-Ansah, et al. 2011). Tourists' expenditure on these tourist facilities has two positive effects on the economy. First, it increases local production and income generation and, second, employment generation (Mensah-Ansah, et al. 2011).

For over a decade, tourist expenditure on accommodation has been the highest of all of the tourist expenditure in Ghana (see Figure 2.15).

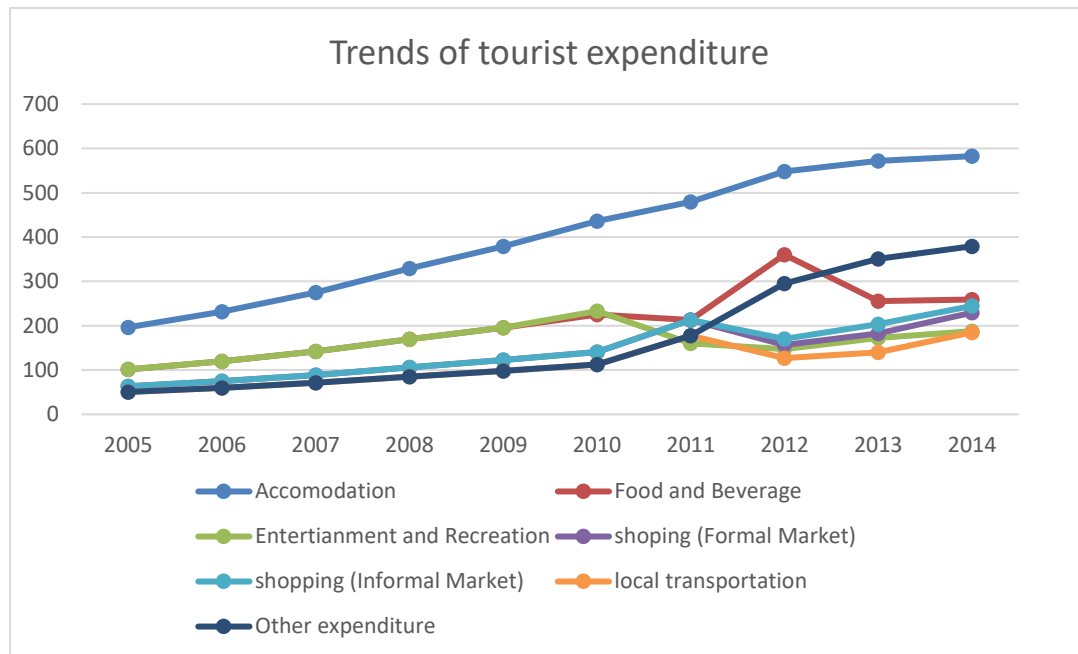


Figure 2.15 Trend of Tourist Expenditure

Author's computation using data from Ghana Statistical Service (2017).

2.7 Hotels in Ghana

The accommodation sector plays an essential facilitating role in the promotion of tourism in Ghana. In Ghana, the Greater Accra Region has the highest number of hotels which may be due to the fact that the Greater Accra region is the administrative capital of Ghana. As the national capital and a business hub, it attracts the highest number of conferences, seminars, and workshops, which utilise the services of hotels (Mensah-Ansah, et al. 2011).

The system for classifying hotels is different in each country, and even hotels from the same country might follow different criteria because there are local regulations (Martin-Fuentes 2016). Even on an international level, there is no common standard concerning what a hotel from each category should provide (Martin-Fuentes 2016). However, there are general ways of classifying hotels. Hotels are classified into various categories all over the world, and can be classified based on their target market,

size, location, facilities or ownership (Baker, et al. 2000; Martin-Fuentes 2016). Under the target market category, a hotel is classified according to the types of guest it caters for, such as business and leisure properties. Hotels are also classified according to where they are located, for example, city centre hotels, suburban hotels, or resort hotels (Baker, et al. 2000). Some hotels may be classified with respect to their size, such as small hotels (fewer than 100 rooms), medium-sized hotels (normally have between 100 and 200 rooms), while large hotels (usually have more than 200 rooms). Hotels also differ in their standard of services and in the facilities they offer, such as full-service hotels, budget hotels, and self-catering hotels (Baker, et al. 2000).

Hotels are classified by their ownership, for example, private (an independent hotel owned by a person, a partnership, or a private company), a local group (several hotels owned by a local company), and an international group (hotels which form part of an international chain of hotels) (Baker, et al. 2000). Given the focus on servicescapes in this study, it is believed that the star rating is an important way to distinguish hotels. A discussion of the classification of hotels is necessary for exploring the reception experiences because the level of service is not the same across all hotels and again the study will be limited to a certain group of hotels.

Ghana Tourism Board (GTB) was created in 1973, which has principally regulated and managed the tourism industry, including hospitality businesses. The GTB was put under the auspices of the Ministry of Tourism in 1993 (now The Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Creative Arts). The GTB was transformed to the Ghana Tourism Authority (GTA) in 2011 through the Tourism Law, Act 817, which was passed by the parliament of Ghana; this was to give more meaning to tourism infrastructure development in Ghana. A further role of the GTA is to rate hotels.

There are two prestigious hotel rating systems: American Automobile Association (AAA) which use diamonds as symbols, and Forbes Travel Guide (formerly known as Mobile Travel Guide) which uses stars as symbols (refer to Appendix F) (American Automobile Association 2012; Foris 2014; Minazzi 2010). Hotels are classified based on the star system (1-5 stars), and the quality of the brand is based on awarding the quality mark symbol (Foris 2014; Martin-Fuentes 2016). The star rating system is also applicable to hotels in Ghana where the GTA classifies hotels as follows; five-star (luxury), four stars (1st class), three stars (2nd class), two stars (3rd class), and one star (4th class). Studies have linked a higher hotel category to the higher price set by the hotel, analysing them not from the point of view of monetary units, but in the form of a ranking (from 1 to 5) (Martin-Fuentes 2016). By extension to guest ratings where hotels with higher prices achieve a better score from guests (Martin-Fuentes 2016).

There are other accommodation facilities which have lower grading and do not fall under the stars-rating category. They include the private and commercial guest houses, and budget hotels and hostels (Ghana Tourist Board 2005). These respective classes are based on the facilities of the hotel and level of service. In this study, the choice of hotels ranged from 3-star to 5-star hotels (see Methodology, section 4.2.3); therefore, the need to understand what goes into the classification of the hotels in Ghana.

According to Ariffin and Maghzi (2012), star rating has always influenced guests' expectation of what level of hospitality they should receive at a hotel, as guests presume the higher the star rating of a hotel, the higher the level of service. Comparatively, there is a difference between staff service, servicescapes, guest motivation, perception and experiences between a five-star hotel and a three-star hotel (refer to Appendix I) (Ariffin & Maghzi 2012; Lashley 2008b). Five-star hotels offer the highest level of accommodation and services and a high degree of personal service. The hotel lobbies are sumptuous and will often have a spacious reception hall with several seats and beverage service. The Reception is open 24 hours, with multilingual staff. They provide a personalised greeting for each guest with room service usually available 24 hours a day. A concierge is also available to assist guests as well as doorman-service or valet parking. A three-star hotel, on the other hand, as a less spacious reception area and typically offers much fewer services.

Ghana in recent years has witnessed a tremendous demand for hotel accommodation and services due to an increase in visitor numbers as a result of tourism, business and investment opportunities and educational exchange programmes (Nimako & Mensah 2013). There has been a continuous growth in hotel numbers and occupancy levels as a result of these demands (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Number of Hotel, Rooms and Beds

Year	Hotels		
	Number	Rooms	Beds
2010	1,797	28,058	34,288
2011	2,136	34,423	39,934
2012	2,136	34,423	39,934
2013	2,228	36,749	40,176
2014	2,570	41,331	45,507

Source: (Ghana Tourism Authority 2016)

2.8 Conclusion

A discussion of the context in which the hotel reception experience is studied helps to understand and highlight the significance of culture and context, which is key to the overall aim of this thesis. This discussion included the people and their way of life and the consequent form of the hospitality and tourism industry in Ghana.

While a collectivist and generally hospitable set of norms and values distinguish Ghanaian culture it is also a developing country experiencing a boom in international visitor arrivals. This context provides a complex set of circumstances in which service is performed within the hospitality industry, especially in hotels which are the sites of direct, person-to-person interactions between visitors and hosts. The next chapter discusses the theoretical background of the study.

Chapter 3

Literature Review

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to explore the hotel reception experience and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in this experience within a developing economy's (Ghana) context. The literature review focuses on three main theoretical concepts: the experience economy, co-creation, and servicescapes, to understand the hotel reception experiences. From an organisational and business perspective, experience is created when "a company intentionally uses services as a stage and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event" (Pine & Gilmore 1999, p. 11). According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), successful experiences are those that the customer finds unique, memorable and sustainable over time. Co-creation of experience is a theoretical construct, which involves a consumer as an active participant in consuming and producing experiences, and deals with consumer involvement in defining and designing the experience. The servicescape refers to the physical setting of the service organisation.

These three concepts (experience economy, co-creation, servicescape) have not been utilised together before to understand reception experiences, which in itself is relatively under-studied. The extensive review of literature on these theories demonstrates that, independently, the theories of the experience economy, co-creation and servicescapes play a crucial role in creating guest experiences. This study, therefore, argues that guest experiences are co-created by the receptionist and the guest within the servicescape producing various outcomes (often measured as satisfaction/dissatisfaction) for the parties involved. It must be noted that most studies relating to hotels do not look concurrently at suppliers and consumers (demand and supply-side perspective). This study incorporates both of these closely connected processes.

Research on tourist and guest experiences has been predominantly done in developed countries such as New Zealand (Harkison, Hemmington, & Hyde 2018), Switzerland (Neuhofer, Buhalis, & Ladkin 2015) South Korea (Chang 2018), United States of America (Pine & Gilmore 1999), and others. A study conducted on accommodation experiences in New Zealand (a developed country), for example, was limited to luxury international hotels and the hotels used in the study were all part of international chains with an international brand and had won multiple international awards (Harkison, et al. 2018). These luxury hotels cater to a specific clientele but not to all tourists, for example, backpackers. As

indicated in Chapter One (section 1.1), developing countries contribute to tourism development globally (Azarya 2004). Therefore there is the need for research in experiences to be extended to developing countries and local branded hotels as well as international ones (Harkison, et al. 2018) to understand guest experiences from the context point of view.

The context of developing countries is quite different from that of developed countries. As indicated in Chapter Two (section 2.6), developing countries have many development challenges compared to developed countries. These challenges include: economic challenges such as low income and poverty; socio-cultural challenges such as inequality; and environmental problems such as environmental degradation and water shortages. According to Puig, et al. (2017), for example, hotels in developing countries consume more resources than the average local community member to provide for guests and maintain luxury amenities. Their study found golf courses contributed to 87 per cent of hotel water consumption and swimming pools 35 per cent. Guests' water consumption rates are also about 116 gallons per day, double the average local demand. Areas where hotels are built face these harsh impacts first-hand as resource supply decreases. This causes more frequent water shortages, and those who cannot afford to keep up with the high prices of water are forced to do without (Puig, et al. 2017). However, most developing countries have a rich culture, and happy friendlier people (Borrero, Escobar, Cortés, & Maya 2013). Cultural backgrounds and cultural experiences play a critical role in hospitality and tourism experiences (Patterson & Mattila 2008). This is particularly important because of the co-creation of the experiences where the culture of the participants (staff and guest) comes to bear during the interaction.

The current study sought to understand hotel experiences in this context as it is likely to add substantively to existing understandings of the production of such experiences and to do so both empirically (collecting data for kinds of hotels that have not been studied before) but also, most importantly, theoretically. For example, hotel experiences are 'co-created'. In an increasingly globalised tourism industry and with increasing numbers of tourists travelling internationally it is necessary to shed light on how co-creation of experiences occurs when people are from radically different cultural backgrounds. Further, focusing on such a case of hugely divergent sets of cultural experiences between the co-creators may well reveal a fundamentally new approach to such experiences or, indeed, to the process of co-creation more generally.

A thorough search of the literature suggests no studies on the hotel reception experience in a developing country context has been undertaken and published in international journals. The front office (also known as 'reception') is a department which exists in all hotels regardless of size, management system, facilities, ownership, and the level of services rendered. The Front office is

regarded as the nerve centre of any hotel facility (Bardi 2007) and is the most visible department in a hotel (Baker, et al. (2000) (Ansah, et al. 2012; Baker, et al. 2000). It is usually the first experience guests have of the hotel where 'first impressions' are created. Further, it also combines both a structured and 'open' interpersonal interaction since it deals with recurrent tasks (such as registration, room allocation bill payment, facility and attraction information provision) but also more 'soft skill' interactions in which guests might discuss all sorts of personal and casual topics. The front office is the physical setting where reception experiences are co-created; therefore, reception experience is where very significant aspects of that co-creation occur.

The literature on hotel studies discussed above has either focused on hotels generally, for example, the entire hotel experience or on sub-units of operation such as restaurants and housekeeping. This research focuses on a specific area - the front office experience. Furthermore, most hotel-related studies do not look concurrently at suppliers and consumers (demand and supply-side perspective). Such studies focus either only on consumers (Knutson, et al. 2009; Poria, et al. 2011; Torres, et al. 2014), or are largely theoretical analyses (Bill Xu & Chan 2010; A. Walls, et al. 2011). This study empirically examines the supply and the demand side by soliciting the perspectives of the guests, staff, and Front Office Managers of the reception experience, given experiences are co-created.

The present study has been researched from the perspectives of stakeholders involved in the hotel reception experience: General Managers, Front Office Managers, receptionists and guests. These participants have been included because they all have a crucial role to play in co-creating the hotel reception experience.

As indicated earlier, this literature review focuses on the theories which underpin the current study. The rest of the chapter provides a detailed discussion of these theories and why they can be used to understand hotel reception experiences. The chapter begins by discussing the experience economy, before considering the process of co-creation and, finally, servicescapes.

3.2 The experience economy

The concept of the experience economy is closely related to tourism both in its origin and application (Morgan, et al. 2009). According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), the developed world had moved from an economy based on production to one that was based on service but then began to shift again towards an experience-based economy. Their view was based partly on their analysis of the growth of leisure and tourism attractions in the United States (USA), such as theme parks, concerts, cinema and sports events, which they found to perform better than other sectors in terms of price, employment and nominal Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Their justification was that these businesses all offered

experiences which were valued because they were unique, memorable, and engaged the individual in a personal way. Services, by contrast, were becoming commodities because consumers regarded them as homogenous and purchased them simply because of price and availability. When a guests purchase services, they pays for a set of intangible activities carried out on their behalf, but when they buys an experience, they pay to enjoy a series of memorable events that a company stages as in a theatrical play to engage the customer in an inherently personal way. Supporting this notion, Hemmington (2007) emphasized that guests do not buy service quality they 'purchase memories'; they do not buy food and drink; they buy the 'meal experience'.

This section discusses the concept of experience and its importance to hospitality and tourism. It also discusses the history of the development of the experience economy which highlights the trend of business shifting its focus from delivering physical products to guest experiences. The section ends with a consideration of the importance of pre-experience expectations of guests. It highlights the need for hospitality and tourism organisations to recognise the expectations of guests and how they influence the overall experience.

3.2.1 The history of experience Economy

Many researchers, over the years, have been interested in experiences. These researches are from various disciplines, including but not limited to Tourism and Hospitality, Psychology, Marketing, Business Management, Economics, and Sociology which have researched experiences from different perspectives (Alcántara-Alcover, Artacho-Ramírez, Martínez-Guillamón, & Campos-Soriano 2013).

The history of research on experience describes a shift in understanding consumption, from the consumption of physical products to the consumption of experiences. This shift occurred because consumers did not desire products but satisfying experiences (Pine & Gilmore 1999). In other words, consumers want products because they believe the products will provide the experience they want. Engaging in experiences consists of four components: (a) it involves progression over time; (b) there is anticipation; (c) there is a uniqueness that will make it stand out from the ordinary; (d) it reaches some sort of completion (Dewey 1963).

Exactly 50 years ago Toffler (1970) predicted a paradigm shift that would deeply affect how people viewed goods and services in the future and that there would be a new sector called the 'experience industries' (Toffler 1970; Knutson et al. 2006). Further, (Pine & Gilmore 1998) suggested a move from goods and services to experiences which they believed was the reason why tourism and hospitality businesses had to produce successful experiences to remain competitive (Pine & Gilmore 1998). Further, they argued that it is necessary for tourism and hospitality businesses not only to learn how

to produce experiences but also how to stage those experiences. They argued that goods and even services were no longer adequate in and of themselves and that, in an increasingly competitive environment, it would be the quality of the overall experience that would be the differentiator (Pine and Gilmore 1998).

Shaw and Ivens (2002) also suggested there should be a move away from delivering services and a move towards creating customer experiences which, in their opinion, would help to produce an outcome of competitive advantage for the business organisation. According to Williams (2006), tourism and hospitality organisations must stage experiences as if they were actors in a 'theatre' and that, additionally, modern economies have transitioned, resulting in a move from the marketing of services to experiences.

Pine and Gilmore (1999) identified four realms of experience (see Figure 3.1), which are differentiated in terms of the level of consumer involvement and participation. The four dimensions are entertainment, education, escapism, and aesthetics. The entertainment and esthetics dimensions involve passive participation, and the consumer does not affect or influence the experiential outcome. In contrast, the educational and escapism dimensions involve active participation, where the consumer plays a prominent role in the process of the experience (Oh, Fiore, & Jeoung 2007; Pine and Gilmore, 1999). The tourists who passively participate in destination activities do not directly influence the performance of the destination (business). At the same time, an active participant will personally affect the performance or the events that become part of their experience (Oh et al. 2007).

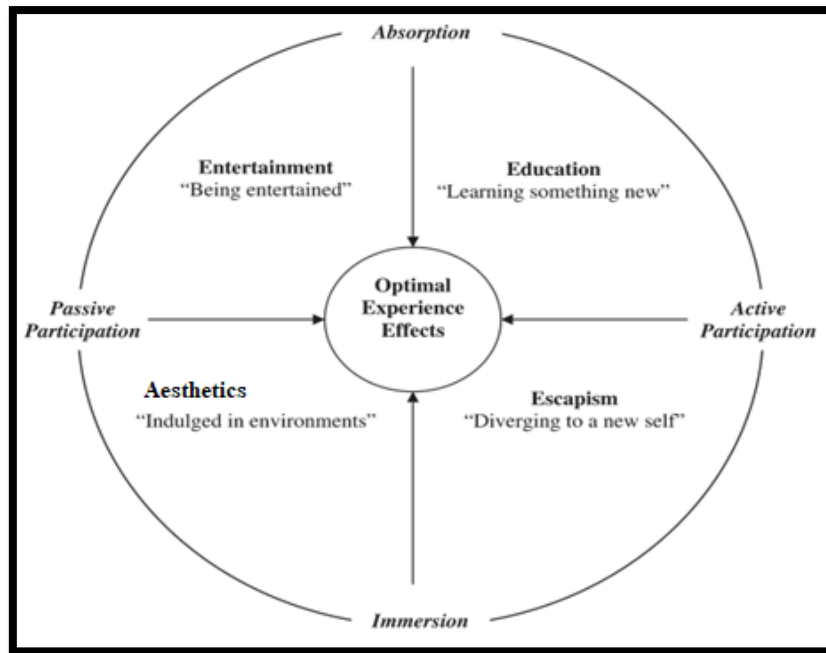


Figure 3.1 The Four Realms of Experience

Source: adapted from Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Oh et al. (2007)

Regarding absorption-immersion, the consumer usually '*absorbs*' entertaining and educational activities of a destination, and '*immerses*' in the destination environment resulting in aesthetic or escapist experiences. In this context absorption is defined as "occupying a person's attention by bringing the experiences into mind", and immersion as "becoming physically/virtually part of the experience itself" (Pine & Gilmore, 1999, p.31). Each of these four dimensions combines to form the optimal experience, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999) and Oh et al. (2007).

In the four realms of experience, entertainment (e.g., going to a show) usually involves customers participating passively. Education involves participants acquiring new skills or increasing the skills they already have. For example, learning languages and playing sports, attending informal lectures and visiting heritage sites. Activities that involve an escapist dimension are characterised by both active participation and immersion. It includes sports activities performed during travel such as skiing and paragliding. The aesthetic experiences are passive. The participants are immersed in the activity but have less effect on the environment such as looking at natural views (Pine and Gilmore 1999; Williams, 2006).

3.2.2 The experience economy in hospitality and tourism

As indicated earlier, this overall shift in how hotel businesses operate towards guest experiences has made them a priority in hospitality, leading to a renewed emphasis on creating an atmosphere of hospitableness and hosting. According to Hepple, Kipps, and Thomson (1990), there are four characteristics of hospitality (given to guests) which are: hospitality as an act by a host that is given a guest who is currently away from their home; the transmission of hospitality is interactive; it comprises a blend of both tangible (products) and intangible factors (services); and the host provides for the guests' security and their psychological and physiological comfort (Ariffin & Maghzi 2012).

The hospitality industry has inherent intangibility. That intangible aspect requires people to deliver the hospitality product which, in effect, means that the actions of those responsible for that delivery become the 'product' (see 3.4.2.2).

Hospitality thus exists within the lived experience. It is an experience that is co-created by the guest and the host (O'Gorman 2007). Both the staff and guests have roles to play in service encounters and service experiences (Carù & Cova 2006; Lugosi 2008; McGrath & Otnes 1995; Price, Arnould, & Deibler 1995), referred to as co-creation which is described in detail in section 3.4.

According to Pine and Gilmore (1999), successful experiences are those that the customer finds unique, memorable and sustainable over time, would want to repeat and build upon, and enthusiastically recommend (promote through word-of-mouth). Experience management aims to create competitiveness by focussing on the improvement of the customer experience through experience engineering: "customer experience engineering is the art and science of engineering experiences that leave a lasting impression on every customer, every time" (Hudson 2017, p. 4). Customers and their experiences, not products and services are at the centre of the business process, not products and services. From the perspective of work on the experience economy what is important is the essential role of staged experiences as a source of added value where all involved—the consumer, staff, and the organisation—derive benefits. (Andersson 2007; Gilmore & Pine 2002; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Sundbo & Darmer 2008). Pine and Gilmore (1998; 1999) suggested that the most important part of a successful experience is for both the service provider and the consumer to be satisfied.

To the consumer, experiences that are both satisfying and successful are the ones that the consumer will eagerly recreate in the future and promote through word-of-mouth (Harkison 2017), which is what the organisation aims for to gain more business (Pine & Gilmore 1999). Another important aspect of

experiences is the impressions consumers are left with after an experience. In combination with these impressions, the effects of customers' encounters with goods and services, physical images, advertising, public relations, and other people's recommendations encourage consumers to repeat purchase and to recommend the organisation to others (Norman 1991).

According to Brunner-Sperdin and Peters (2009), an aspect of the experience is the memory that is left with the consumers. Such memories, impressions and feedback, are posted and shared on social media platforms such as Trivago, TripAdvisor, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter by guests (Ekiz, Khoo-Lattimore, & Memarzadeh 2012; Harkison 2017). Such information on these social media platforms helps potential customers to make future decisions on the choice of destination or service organisation such as hotels. For the provider or the destination, such information serves as feedback about their services which helps in their service design strategies, for marketing purposes and is a source of data to understand customer experiences (Baek, Choe & Ok (2020).

The tourists' overall experience is made up of a very large number of individual experiences. These experiences are taxi rides, restaurant meals, local attractions, beaches, theme parks, museums, and theatre (Zouni & Kouremenos 2008). According to Lemke, Clark, and Wilson (2006). Customer experience is context-specific and, in this research, hotels provide a platform for guest interaction, which generate emotions and imparts to guests feelings towards the service that is provided (Knutson & Beck 2004; MacMillan & McGrath 1997).

3.2.3 The hotel experience

Hospitality provided by the accommodation sector makes a significant contribution to the overall experience of the tourist; thus the industry has seen more and more hotels and boutique accommodation shift from delivering services, to creating experiences for the guest (Alcántara-Alcover, et al. 2013; Ariffin & Maghzi 2012; Pizam 1993; Wang, Chen, & Chen 2012).

Hotel research shows that experience (service) quality leads to customer loyalty and attraction of new customers, positive word-of-mouth, employee satisfaction and commitment, enhanced corporate image, reduced costs, and increased business performance as well as improving the financial performance of the hotel (Akbaba 2006; Alexandris, Dimitriadis, & Markata 2002; Kim & Cha 2002; Salazar, Costa, & Rita 2010; Wilkins, Merrilees, & Herington 2007; Worsfold et al. 2016).

Pine and Gilmore (1999) refer to hotels as '*experience stagers*' which no longer only offer goods or services but experiences, co-created experiences. Guest experiences include their memorable

encounters throughout the encounter they have with an organization. In the case of a hotel, this includes all activities and processes from making a reservation through to arrival and the actual stay until billing and check-out (Knutson & Beck 2004). This journey is comprehensive, as it moves the guests from the expectation they had before the experience right through to the assessment they make after the experience is over (Knutson & Beck 2004).

The concept of the experience economy is relevant to the hotel industry in developing countries. As indicated earlier, hotels now engage their customers in unique experiences (Alcántara-Alcover, et al. 2013; Ariffin & Maghzi 2012; Pizam 1993; Wang, Chen, & Chen 2012). Given the globalization of the hotel business, hotel chains are being established all over the world, including in developing countries. For example, the hospitality sector in the developing country Ghana is becoming a prime development target for multinational hospitality hotel chains expanding into Africa (Oxford Business Group, 2018; Adzoyi, & Klutse, 2015). Almost all leading international hotel brands have established footholds in Ghana, include Golden Tulip, Best Western, Mövenpick, Accor hotels such as Novotel and Ibis styles, Kempinski, Marriot hotel and Holiday Inn (Oxford Business Group, 2018). The next section explores guest expectations and its impact on the perception of guests experiences.

3.2.4. Hotel guest pre-experience expectation

Hotel guests have initial expectations which they bring to the hotel. For example, guests expect a warm welcome at the reception while checking in (Sthapit, Björk, & Barreto 2020). There are varied sources from which guests will form this expectation; such as information (from friends, colleagues and family), inference, previous encounters, demographics, family lifestyle or personality (Coye 2004; Knutson, et al. 2009), other guests' reviews, a firm's marketing and advertising (e.g., images of the property on the web) (Hotel News Resource 2018), and, ultimately, broader contexts such as host and guest culture (Krishnan, et al. 2011).

Customer expectations can be defined as any set of behaviours or actions that individuals anticipate when interacting with a service organisation (Salesforce Research 2019). In the past, customers expected basics like quality service and fair pricing, but the current trend of customer expectation is much higher and includes proactive service, and personalised interactions (Salesforce Research 2019).

A central assumption is that guests map expectations against what they encounter to judge the quality of their experience. Therefore, satisfaction in the context of hotels can be referred to as a function of pre-arrival expectations and post-service experiences (Chen & Chen 2010). When experiences compared to expectations result in feelings of gratification, the guest is satisfied. However, when they

result in feelings of displeasure, the guest is dissatisfied and will generate negative word of mouth (Chen & Chen 2010; Sthapit, et al. 2020).

Studies show that understanding customers' needs and exceeding expectations is essential for competitive service businesses (Salesforce Research 2019). More specifically, the hotel image and customer satisfaction with the service encounter are important to guests' intentions to repurchase, to recommend, and to exhibit loyalty (Kandampully & Suhartanto 2000). Studies have linked meeting guest's expectations to repeat business. For example, according to a study by Forbes (2018), 80 % of customers will recommend a company to friends and family after reporting a satisfying customer experience. However, if the experience falls short of expectations it can lead to negative information being shared to potential customers (Harkison 2017; Z. Luo & Qu 2016); a tendency which is amplified by the proliferation of social media and customer review sites (Benbria 2016; Forbes 2018; Harkison 2017; Salesforce Research 2019). Partly, this amplification is because social media has made it possible for information to be sent globally and at a faster rate.

A gap in understanding and meeting the expectations of guests by managers and frontline staff can mar the hotel experience for the guest (Luk & Layton 2002). To add further complexity, the expectations about hotel hospitality experiences are influenced by personal factors such as gender, the purpose of stay, and nationality and also by hotel characteristics such as star rating (Ariffin and Maghzi (2012).

Hotel star rating can have a strong influence on guest expectations (Ariffin & Maghzi 2012) as the star rating system was traditionally used to rate a hotel's quality levels (Israeli 2002). For example, Briggs, Sutherland, and Drummond (2007) in their study of service quality in Scottish hotels found guests of a five-star hotel have higher expectations of hospitality compared to those of a three-star or lower hotels. This finding of Briggs, et al. (2007) is in line with one of the questions the current research seeks to address which is 'the impact of hotel class/ownership status on expectation and perception of hotel reception experience'.

Literature suggests that experience arises from a co-creation process in which the customer has a more active role in generating the experience. The next section explores the concept of co-creation of guest experiences.

3.3 Co-creation of the guest experience

Co-creation of guest experiences involves the interaction between the customer and business organisations to create guest experiences. At its broadest, the co-creation process involves customers,

staff, managers, and other stakeholders, such as organizations and government agencies (Harkison 2018; McColl-Kennedy, Cheung, & Ferrier 2015). The concept of co-creation has been highlighted partly because of the development of the Internet and the massive amount of information that customers now access.

The influence of co-creation has seen business organizations rethink their focus on services and products and look towards the experience environment to engage their customers in an experience and not just the services end products. By shifting their focus in this way, many organizations have gained competitive advantage and increased their value. Researchers have predicted the future belongs to those service organizations who can successfully co-create unique experiences with their customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004).

To gain a competitive advantage, frontline employees should be used for their knowledge and skills to generate well-created customer experiences (Bharwani & Jauhari 2013). This section will explore the topic of co-creation of the guest experience in the broader context of the hospitality and tourism industry. It will review the literature to include the definition, history, and the importance of co-creation. Further, the specific ways in which hotel guest experiences are co-created will be discussed.

3.3.1 Definition, history and importance of co-creation of guest experiences

Co-creation, in the context of this research, refers to service experiences created by the consumer (guest) and staff (receptionist) in a particular context, which includes the immediate context (servicescape) but also the broader destination context. Co-creation is made possible by using resources such as time, effort or ability (Payne, et al. 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003).

The inception of co-creation has been generally credited to the internet and the vast amount of information it offered customers (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2002). This was because of expansion in the corporate pursuit of efficiency that started in 1995 (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2002). Customers had the opportunity to communicate explicitly with manufacturers of products and services. This was made possible by the internet, which gave access to activities that were either affecting or directly involving the company-customer relationship (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2002).

A number of researchers have come out with various definitions of co-creation. Researchers have used the term co-creation to describe how customers interact and engage in dialogue with organisations during product design, production, delivery, and finally consumption (Chathoth, et al. 2013; Payne, et al. 2009). Other researchers suggest that co-creation describes the process whereby an experience emerges from the interactions of two or more people. Specifically, the experience of

the guest is created with the input of the host (Chathoth, et al. 2013; Payne, et al. 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) suggested that positive customer experiences are often dependent on the customer's active participation in the creative process. For example, the supplier (the hotel and receptionist) can provide the consumer (the guest) with a scene with other actors (other guests and staff), but it is the customer's reaction to, and interaction with, people and events that make an experience (Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004). Vittersø, Prebensen, Hetland, & Dahl, (2017 p. 254) suggested that co-creation, "to a large extent, is about tourist participation in producing the experience through involvement, and the spending of time and effort in producing the experience".

From the above, co-creation has been defined in different contexts. However, it shares the feature of involving the customer's active participation in the process of service delivery and consumption. The customer is always the co-producer or co-creator of the service (Lusch & Vargo 2006) for example in co-design, customer assembly and self-service (Lusch & Vargo 2006).

As indicated earlier, co-creation generally occurs between the customer and the service provider but Finsterwalder and Tuzovic (2010) and Harkison (2018) argued that it involves a wider circle of people than just a customer and service provider. Customers engage in a range of practices with other parties including, for example, other customers, staff, friends and family both inside and outside the setting (Harkison 2018; McColl-Kennedy, et al. 2015). Lin, Gursoy, & Zhang (2020) suggested the customer-to-customer interaction is important in the evaluation of service experiences. Therefore, service providers must identify these relationships and develop strategies for each stage of the guests' interactions (Lin, et al. 2020). Another study suggested researchers have tended to focus on the influence of the service encounter on customer perception and experience while being among other customers, and not considering the group dynamics in the co-creation process (Finsterwalder & Tuzovic 2010). However, Campos, Mendes, Valle and Scott (2018) argued that more research needs to be done to explore the extent to which co-creation experience is involved in interaction and active participation, and to what extent co-creation affects psychological processes (e.g., cognitive, affective or perceptual processes) and vice versa.

Co-creation is important to service experiences as it benefits both the customer and the organization. To the customer, experience co-creation positively influences their satisfaction and their level of expenditure and the enjoyment of their experience (Buonincontri, Morvillo, Okumus & Niekerk 2017). Co-creation can also influence the tourism experience and, in turn, a customer's revisit intentions (Sugathan & Ranjan 2019). As indicated earlier, co-creation involves a network of people, and their

interaction is crucial to the experiences. The following section explores the people involved in co-creation, why they take part and the role they play in co-creating experiences.

3.3.2 Key players in co-creation of guest experiences

The essence of co-creation has to do with actors creating something in collaboration with or influenced by others (Jaakkola, Helkkula, & Aarikka-Stenroos 2015). Co-creation requires both staff and guest to be present; therefore, human interactions are a crucial part of the hotel experience (Walls, et al. 2011; Baek, et al. 2020). Pleasant interactions between staff and guests are essential to a quality service experience (Baek, et al. 2020). According to Walls, et al. (2011), guest experiences are derived through a unique combination of responses to human interaction dimensions and physical environment dimensions. This is supported by a study which suggests the key to improving experiences is to let stakeholders play a leading role in creating rewarding experiences. They mentioned that stakeholders can include customers, staff, suppliers and other people outside the hotel (Ramaswamy & Gouillart 2010). For this research, key parties in the hotel reception experiences are managers, staff, and guests at the hotel. As stated earlier, hotel service experiences are co-created by the guest (consumer) and staff (receptionist). Managers usually perform strategic roles such as engaging in staff training and supervision, which translates into the reception experience.

In co-creating service experiences, both staff and guest have co-constructing roles to perform (Carù & Cova 2006; Lugosi 2008) and it is their interaction that is most important (Gronroos 1985; Grove, et al. 1992; Parasuraman, et al. 1985). Staff and guests interact within a service organisation to generate their own experience, bringing with them their understandings of the situation, based on pre-existing expectations, attitudes, and beliefs, which relate to their motivations, and culture (Payne, et al. 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003). These co-created experiences are consumed by the guests.

3.3.2.1 The hotel guest

Guest service experiences and satisfaction are complex phenomena (Xiang, Schwartz, Gerdes, and Uysal (2015). The hotel consumer is at the centre of the reception experience because they co-create the experience; they purchase the experience, but also play a role in its co-creation (they are part-producers of the product they consume). Therefore, when hospitality businesses are designing guest experiences to deliver hospitality products and services, they need to focus on the perspective of the customers to have a successful hotel experience (Bharwani & Jauhari 2013).

For the hotel experience to be successful, it should be based on the connection between the host (the staff) and the guest and the willingness of the guest to engage in the production of the hotel experience offered by the hotel (Alcántara-Alcover, et al. 2013). O’Gorman (2007) notes that one

authentic gift of hospitality is the act of kindness, where the guest experience turns a stranger into a friend in a relatively short space of time.

According to Walls, et al. (2011), no two individuals will have the same experiences because experience dimensions are interpreted differently. Personal characteristics of consumers, including cultural backgrounds, may translate to different expectations, causing differences in the experience during the guest encounter with the front-line staff (Brunner-Sperdin & Peters 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003; Walls, et al. 2011). This can be important in a hotel context, where services are provided to both domestic and international guests (Ortega & Rodríguez 2007). Java, Ueltschy, Laroche, Eggert, and Bindl (2007) were of the view that culture is one of the most effective, but most complicated, elements that hotels need to understand to be able to deliver experiences that will match a guest's needs, expectations, preferences, and perceptions.

Similarly, guests need to understand the context (culture) they are visiting in order to be satisfied with the experience. Culture forms an important part of each individual's daily life, and it influences their decisions, behaviour and rationalization process of their behaviour (Patterson & Mattila 2008). Therefore, the uniqueness of both the guest's and host's culture will influence the perception and expectation of the reception experience. (This has been further discussed below in section 3.4.3 and Chapter Five section 5.3.1, Chapter Six, Section 6.6, and Chapter Seven section 7.3 and 7.4.3).

Further, the hotel guest can either be a first-timer or repeat/frequent guest (Johnson, Lervik Olsen, & Wallin Andreassen 2009), business or leisure traveller, female or male, or different age categories (Holmes, Lockstone-Binney, & Deery 2013; Prayag, Rezwan, & Hosany 2013). Also, another personal characteristic such as personality, to varying degrees, affects most of guest hotel stays (Walls, et al. 2011). The reason is these characteristics impact their motivation to travel, perception, and expectation of a destination (Knutson, et al. 2009) and the way they evaluate a service experience.

Therefore, these characteristics of potential guests should be considered when staging experiences and frontline staff should be trained and guided on how they influence guest expectations and behaviour in the guest experience process (Walls, et al. 2011).

3.3.2.2 The front-line staff

As has been indicated, people are an inseparable part of the intangible aspect of hospitality service. Among factors that determine experience quality in the hotel is the role of front-line staff in co-creating the service experience (Poria, et al. 2011). The staff attitude, professional behaviour, proactive service, and professional appearance combine to make service experience (Walls, et al.

2011). As with most experiences in service industries, how the hotel staff co-creates the experience (with the guest) is crucial to guests' overall enjoyment of the experience being purchased (Dawson, Abbott, & Shoemaker 2011). Staff encounters with a guest at the hotel can stimulate the guest's experience, which may be positive or negative (Barsky & Nash 2002). Furthermore, a disorganised check-in or check-out, improper dressing of staff or untidiness may make guests feel dissatisfied about the service experience (Barsky & Nash 2002).

The perceived risk in a service context (related to intangibility and simultaneous production and consumption of services) causes guests to attach great importance to staff capabilities and knowledge (Helm 2011). More specifically, the attitudes and behaviour of service staff contribute significantly to guests' perceived experiences. The dedication of staff may turn the interactions into memorable experiences for guests and increase their satisfaction and trust. The staff that are customer-oriented are concerned with satisfying customer needs (Brown, Mowen, Donavan, & Licata 2002). Customer orientation is a key driver for customers' levels of trust and satisfaction with the service organisations (Bejou, Wray, & Ingram 1996; Szymanski & Henard 2001). Hence, the customer orientation of service staff is regarded as the main determinant of the service organisation's success in co-creating experiences (Hennig-Thurau 2004).

There is evidence of a relationship between service behaviour and service quality; extra-role service behaviour positively affects the reliability, responsiveness, and assurance and empathy dimensions of service quality (Luk & Layton 2002). Extra-role behaviours describe certain behaviours of frontline staff which are not part of their formal job requirement. But the staff go beyond formal job requirements to provide timely and satisfying service to customers (Netemeyer, & Lichtenstein 2008; Tremblay, Chênevert, Vandenberghe, & Parent-Rochelleau 2018). Therefore studies have suggested Human Resource Management (HRM) practices such as recruitment/selection, training/development, and compensation/benefits are important in delivering experience quality (Davidson 2003; Poria, et al. 2011; Tsaur & Lin 2004).

To maximise the likelihood of guest satisfaction and positive experiences, a hotel's staff needs to have professional training and education, adequate knowledge about the hotel products and services, and interest in self-development to provide better service, and competence in providing the service (Clark, Hartline, & Jones 2009; Kim & Cha 2002; Poria, et al. 2011). It is also essential for hotel employees to have appropriate and adequate experience to identify customer needs, to present a professional appearance, with good manners to make hotel guests satisfied. Well-groomed employees project a sense of confidence to the guests (Clark, et al. 2009; Kim & Cha 2002; Poria, et al. 2011).

According to Lovelock, Patterson, and Wirtz (2014), the front-line staff's job is demanding, because they are required to deliver their job with speed and efficiency as well as being courteous and helpful in dealing with guests. The frontline staff are key when it comes to providing excellent service and the firm's competitive advantage (Lovelock et al. 2014). The front-line service staff are important to both the guest and the organisation. The level of service and the way the service staff delivers it can be an essential source of service differentiation and also competitive advantage from the firm's viewpoint. The front-line staff is the core part of the service since it is the most visible element of the service. It is members of a hotel's staff who perform the service, and they significantly determine a memorable service experience (Lovelock, et al. 2014; Walls, et al. 2011; Woods, Ninemeier, Hayes, & Austin 2007).

The hotel receptionists

The front-line staff in the hotel industry is called a receptionist, or a front desk staff/agent/clerk. The hotel receptionist is a person hired to receive guests in the hotel's lobby. They are responsible for assigning guests their rooms, dealing with group arrivals and are responsible for guests' urgent needs and queries. They are also typically responsible for preparing for the arrival of guests, greeting and welcoming them, check-in, and confirming guests' payment method. They keep records of the status of each room in the hotel as well as being responsible for providing information and taking charge of keys to each room of the hotel (Baker, et al. 2000; Bardi 2007). Hence, the role of the reception is essential to guests' service experiences.

The reception staff are expected to possess and acquire certain qualities/skills such as interpersonal and communication skills – appropriate greetings, phone etiquette, formality, adherence to policies and procedures, and a good ability with verbal and non-verbal communication (Doyle 2019). The receptionist is required to be composed, computer literate, and friendly, have organization skills, problem-solving skills, ability to promote sales, and capable of working in teams. They need to have other guest service skills, such as confidence, physical endurance, good memory, being multilingual, having patience, being approachable, having poise, being people-oriented, and resilient (Doyle 2019).

However, despite the essential role the reception staff play in guest experiences, there are significant challenges they face in interacting daily with customers (Lundberg 2010). These challenges may affect staff motivation and job satisfaction and consequently impact the way they co-create services with guests. Frontline workers are ranked among the lowest in total motivation according to a study published in the *Harvard Business Review* (McGregor & Doshi 2018). Included in the challenges are; managing work stress while at the same time maintaining their professionalism associated with the reputation of their firms (Robinson, Kralj, Solnet, Goh, & Callan 2016), poor working conditions such

as antisocial hours of work, part-time or seasonal work, lack of training or inadequate training, and low pay rates (Lundberg 2010). Despite these challenges, staff are expected to co-create the experience with the guest where the guest plays an active role. The hotel receptionists are supervised by the Front Office Manager.

3.3.2.3 The Front Office Manager

The front office department is generally managed and controlled by the Front Office Manager (FOM), also known as the Reception Manager or Front Desk Manager (Bardi 2007; Woods, et al. 2007). The Front Office Manager reports to the Rooms Division Manager or the General Manager of the hotel, depending on the size of the hotel and organizational structure. Their responsibility is to ensure that a hotel achieves the maximum revenue and the highest level of room occupancy possible (Baker, et al. 2000). According to Bardi (2007) the spirit of a particular lodging property is conveyed to guests by a successful Front Office Manager. By applying management principles, the FOM works through the front office staff to communicate feelings of warmth, care, safety, and efficiency to guests. He/she must train personnel in the technical aspects of the Property Management System (PMS) and monitor and motivate the front office staff to maintain a high profile with the guests (Baker, et al. 2000; Bardi 2007; Woods, et al. 2007). The above roles make it essential to include the FOM in the current study in exploring the hotel reception experience. Further, some studies have found instances where managers are involved in the co-creation process. According to Harkison (2018) Hotel General Managers make an appearance at check-ins to interact with guests on arrival to enable them to take part in the hotel experience. Further top management support enhances the effects of customer co-creation (Santos-Vijande, López-Sánchez, & Pascual-Fernandez 2018).

An increasing number of managerial roles are occupied by migrant workers (Akama & Kieti 2007). The hotel business is global and international, which has made it possible for migrants to be employed in other countries (Abdellatif, Amann, & Jaussaud 2010). These skilled migrant managers use their expertise in international companies to achieve success and to gain a competitive edge in the global market place (Fe Causin, Ayoun, & Moreo 2011; Stephenson 2014). For example, these migrant managers are often experienced with corporate culture and more are knowledgeable about the control systems of the headquarters than are their local-country counterparts. In the developing country context, local managers can also learn from these migrant managers, which enhances the global expertise of the organisation. For these reasons, when short-term international visits are insufficient for successfully growing a business in the target country, migrant managers are considered a better option than domestic managers (Fe Causin, et al. 2011).

Both migrant managers and domestic managers, in the discharge of their duties, will encounter cultural differences in one way or the another (migrant managers typically in relation to domestic subordinates and guests, domestic managers in relation to international guests). Kim (2012) suggested that cultural differences influence the operations of hotels and dealing with these differences remains a critical issue for migrant managers. In performing their roles, they are supposed to manage, interact, negotiate, and compromise with people of different backgrounds (Fe Causin, et al. 2011). Misunderstandings and management frustrations can occur as a result of these cultural differences and most especially hidden cultural codes, which can eventually handicap hotel managers' effective operations (Stephenson 2014). Therefore, understanding a host culture is essential in overcoming culture shock, and to minimize the barriers of adjustment for migrant hotel managers, and to improve relations between managers and staff (Lee 2015).

3.3.3 Culture and co-creating hotel reception experiences

Hotel reception interactions involve the just-discussed cultural aspects because the interactions between the guest and receptionists are performed in cross-cultural settings where cultural relations are central to the receptionists' role. The hotel industry is a prime example of an industry that functions across national boundaries, serving guests/tourists who come from different cultures. Discussions about reception interactions are inseparable from culture because of the co-creation of the reception experience and the importance of the host/destinations culture (see Context Chapter Two, section 2.2 and 2.3). Therefore, the management of culture is an important part of a receptionists' role. This section discusses the role of culture in hotel reception encounters and a broader sense of hospitality and tourism in general. It is necessary to have a reasonably nuanced understanding of culture in the context of this study to understand the role of culture in the reception interactions.

Culture is a term used in a variety of ways from various disciplinary perspectives. Culture is difficult to define because of its complexity, different interpretations and fluid boundaries. Culture is a key concept in understanding societies, both past and present, and its definitions are constantly being developed and refined (Giles & Middleton, 1999). To date, scholars have not arrived at a consensus on the definition of culture as the concept is loosely used to describe several elements such as race, nationality religion, language/accent, society in general, sexual orientation and many other values, norms and trends.

One important role of culture is to help people to know about the past and present of a society or a group. Hofstede (1994) defined culture as the unique behaviours and attitudes of a certain group of

people that help distinguish one group from another. Hence, norms acceptable in one culture might not be acceptable in another. Culture includes the learned customs and the meanings given to social life and how it is interpreted by members of a specific social group, whether or not this group is living in the geographic location that they originated from. Nevertheless, an existing cultural pattern can often be mapped to certain geographic locations or to a country.

Several researchers have, however, disagreed with the notion that culture can be tied to a specific geographic location. According to these researchers, culture can no longer be assumed to be as spatially bounded or territorially coherent as they may at first appear for a number of reasons. First, the claim is that people's exposure to societies and cultures through travel has weakened or even changed to a certain degree. Second, since people are now increasingly living near to those from other cultural backgrounds it cannot be simply assumed that there is a 'one-to-one' correspondence between a particular society and a particular culture (e.g., biculturalism, multi-culturalism, etc.). But, the extent to which it has weakened or changed is controversial and debatable.

Some scholars have argued that this process can result in the elimination of cultural differences altogether and the emergence of a new global culture characterised by homogeneity (Albrow, Eade, Washbourne, & Durrschmidt 1994). This is driven by Westernisation (Pieterse 1995), and leading to standardisation due to practices of rationality and commodification (Ritzer 2011). Others have argued that globalisation is leading to the increased differentiation of cultures and the reassertion of cultural identity at a localised level and the emergence of hybrid forms of cultures (Hannerz & Ulf Hannerz 1996). These hybrid forms of cultures are seen to be a result of cultures adapting, borrowing and reinterpreting cultural traits.

The receptionist's role requires an understanding of cultural relations which is key to the human interactions at the front desk. It is important for staff working in the hotel and hospitality industry to understand that cultural expectations—and the complexities around the current dynamic cultural processes just discussed—is not separate from the complex delivery of such services. As has been stated earlier in this chapter, meeting guest expectations is vital in hotel reception experiences. However, guests or travellers from different cultures may have particular preferences and expectations which hotel receptionists need to understand and meet; for example, guests from societies that typically express greater power distance than is usual in the local culture may expect receptionists to communicate respect and play a subordinate role. (Power distance is a term that describes how people belonging to a specific culture view power relationships. It refers to the relationship between those in power and the subordinates in a society where lower ranking individuals depending on the high or low power distance culture react to that authority (Hofstede 2001).

Culture is exhibited in different ways during interactions, such as through the type of greeting and the duration of greetings. In Japanese culture, for example, greetings and how one bows (when greeting) is crucial to the appropriateness of an interaction. The more subordinate a person is, the lower they are expected to bend when they bow when greeting as a sign of respect. Likewise, Nigerians spend a longer time (about five to ten minutes) in the ritual of greeting. Similarly, greetings in the Ghanaian culture are important (see Context, Chapter Two). A person's role expectations and the expression of friendliness is different between cultures. Studies have shown that customers or guests can misinterpret certain hospitable gestures such as friendliness. For example, German customers prefer to be treated formally and find informal, overly friendly dispositions of people in service roles to be uncomfortable (Fitzgerald 1998).

3.3.4 Co-creating guest experiences

Service organisations have a responsibility to enhance the guest experience by managing it and it is the choice of guests as to how much they are able and willing to partake in the experience (Walls et al. 2011). While service organisations cannot guarantee that the guest will have a positive experience, they can create the circumstances and the environment in which guests can have experience (Mossberg 2007). This is the foundation of co-creation, which has been described as an interaction between the customer and provider to create experiences (Shaw & Ivens 2005)

For service organisations to understand the needs of the guests, they must understand the customer's world and this includes the services they co-create, what they co-create, and how they perceive that co-creation process (Andersson 2007). Another way to look at this co-construction or co-creation is to consider that a tourist and a tourism service provider, between them, assemble resources that, together with their skills and time, will provide a consumption set that includes time skills, goods and services of an experience (Andersson 2007).

For an experience to be co-created with a guest, certain elements must be put in place: these elements are humans and products (Schembri 2006). To connect with customers, business entities choreograph or create experiences via human interaction dimensions (such as staff attitude, the professional appearance of the staff, the friendliness of staff, professional, and socialization of guests) and/or physical dimensions (such as artefacts, signs symbols, ambience, and space) (Walls, et al. 2011). The multidimensional impression of a guest's experience is based on the guest's willingness to be influenced by the human and/or physical interaction dimensions, and it is formed by the guest and their encounters with products, services and businesses (Walls, et al. 2011).

Hospitality businesses need to engage the guests through their hotel encounter experience. For example, both the intangible characteristics of the hotel industry (e.g., if the hotel has exceptional views, mentioning it at check-in, or upgrading guests to a room that has an excellent view adds to the intangible quality of a hotel experience) and the tangible characteristics (e.g., the hotel room needs to be well maintained, in pristine condition and thoroughly cleaned at all times) have a crucial role to play in enhancing the overall hotel experience of the guests (Khoo-Lattimore & Ekiz 2014).

In service industries such as the hospitality industry, product quality has been replaced by service quality, and this is seen as a strategy for hospitality to differentiate itself and to be able to add value to the experience of their guests (Knutson, Beck, Kim, & Cha 2010). Service quality refers to a satisfying service or personalized service. In terms of the latter, a hotel might use guest names or personal information with the intent of making a guest feel special and that the hotel staff are treating them as important guests. Personalizing the service can be facilitated through the interaction between the guest and frontline staff (Lashley 2008; Onsøyen, Mykletun, & Steiro 2009). From the perspective of the guests, the staff in a service organization are the service and the brand (Zeithaml et 2006). Hotel guests value staff-related attributes when they evaluate hotel experiences. Therefore, guests' interactions with hotel staff also influence their subsequent word of mouth behaviour (Padma, & Ahn, 2020; Sthapit, et al. 2020).

Throughout the literature, there is consistent evidence that the theory of co-creation is an important concept in guest experiences. This concept has been used to understand hospitality and tourism business in developed countries but, in an era of rapidly changing service trends in the hospitality industry, the theory should also be applicable to hotels in developing economies. Customers are increasingly gaining power and control and organisations therefore need to involve them in the production of their experiences (Binkhorst, & Den Dekker, 2013). The reason is that co-creation is not organisation or product/services centred (Binkhorst, & Den Dekker, 2013). "Putting the human being central in the tourism phenomena has another advantage. With the growing interest to learn about other cultures, tourism experiences increasingly are a means for interaction with others." (Binkhorst & Den Dekker, 2013, p. 324). For hotels in developing countries to remain in business and to be competitive they need to put their customers at the centre of their experience offering.

Creating a memorable experience relies on being able to engage the customer by involving them on sensory, cognitive, emotional, relational and behavioural levels, instead of being solely focused on a functional level (Lashley 2008; Oh, et al. 2007; Schmitt 1999). Given experiences are co-created within a service environment (setting), it is important to discuss the physical and experiential setting which in this thesis is referred to as the 'servicescape'.

3.4 Servicescape in guest experiences

Bitner (1992) used the term servicescape in her seminal work. Since then there have been several studies on the relationship between servicescape and service experiences such as service quality (Hightower, Brady, & Baker 2002), customer satisfaction (Jen, LU, Hsieh, Wu, & Chan 2013), and behavioural intentions (Kearney, Coughlan, & Kennedy 2012). Further, Wall and Berry (2007) suggested that marketing research uses environmental psychology theories to evaluate environmental effects on consumer attitudes, service evaluations, and behavioural responses. This tends to influence an organisation's generation of revenue (Wall & Berry 2007). Research in service industries has shown customer satisfaction depends directly on distinct and singular 'service encounters' (that is the period a customer interacts directly with an organisation) (Bitner 1990; Shostack 1977; Solomon 1985).

Servicescape refers to the physical setting of the service firm. According to Ariffin, et al. (2013), Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) and Wakefield and Blodgett (1999), the physical setting includes facility aesthetics, layout accessibility, cleanliness, seating comfort, electronic equipment display, and the ambience of the service environment (such as the use of light, colour, odour, temperature, noise, and music). All of these factors might independently or in combination influence the guest's senses, and impact their perception of their experiences (Bitner 1990; Rosenbaum 2005).

The physical environment of an organisation (service setting) is important because it is experienced by both the customers and the staff of the firm in general (Ariffin & Aziz 2012; Ariffin, et al. 2013; Bitner 1992; Worsfold, et al. 2016). Bitner (1992) described the servicescape as the 'built environment' (man-made). That is, the servicescape is the physical surrounding as opposed to the natural or social environment. However, later researchers have acknowledged that the environment in which a service encounter occurs is often a mix of built, natural, and social features (Bruwer, Pratt, Saliba, & Hirche 2017; Fredman, Wall-Reinius, & Grundén 2012; Hu & Ritchie 1993).

Zeithaml et al. (2009) define servicescape as the environment in which a service is delivered and in which the firm and the customer interact and any tangible commodities that facilitate performance or communication of the service. In this definition, Zeithaml et al. (2009) reinforce Bitner's idea but add that the servicescape acts as a facilitator. Shostack's (1977) definition of service encounters includes all aspects of a customer's interaction with a service organisation, which includes its employees and its physical facilities ((Wakefield & Blodgett 1996). Further, Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) complete Bitner and Zeithaml's definitions, by stating that servicescape comprises several

dimensions such as a) physical, b) social, c) socially symbolic and d) natural dimension. They argued that the servicescape is a 'comprehensive' concept which includes a wide range of variables.

The servicescape literature categorizes the concept into two frames; first, customers' interaction with the physical setting of the service firm and, second, their relationship with the service staff. The customers' evaluation of the firm affects their behavioural intentions (Li 2021; Lin, et al. 2020; Luo & Homburg 2007). Aesthetic factors and facility layout in service firms may either attract or discourage customers from frequenting or returning to the firm (Ariffin, et al. 2013; Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011; Wakefield & Blodgett 1994).

The role of the service environment includes helping customers to form 'impressions' about the organisation (hotel). The way the organisation's stakeholders perceive the servicescape is of significant influence when forming their initial impression about the experience they are about to have. This is largely because the servicescape of an organisation is the evaluated, tangible elements which are observed to determine the quality of the intangible elements (Simpeh, Nasiru, & Tawiah 2011). For example, in service encounters that involve waiting, a well-designed servicescape can make the waiting time enjoyable (Ariffin, et al. 2013; Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011; Wakefield & Blodgett 1999).

Servicescape significantly impacts the behaviour of stakeholders in terms of revisiting, word-of-mouth advertising and satisfaction. Eventually, this all contributes to an increase in business performance. Cultural artefacts, for example, are important to the experiences of the servicescape (Walls 2013). For this reason, Walls (2013) suggested the use of cultural elements such as symbols and theme songs to portray unique experiences.

Staff form part of the social dimension (environmental stimuli) of the servicescape; frontline staff may connect with a guest on a personal and emotional level (Fisk, Patrício, Rosenbaum, & Massiah 2011; Zomerdijs & Voss 2010). According to Söderlund and Julander (2009), and Shostack (1977a), the features and behaviours of the service staff are an essential source of information to the guest in forming a total impression about a service organisation since they represent something tangible. The physical appearance of the service staff affects the perception of the customer about his/her attributes, for example, competence, friendliness and credibility (Sundaram & Webster 2000). Also, the staff are regarded as 'the face' of the service organisation (Barker & Härtel 2004), and guests' satisfaction with the service depends on them to a significant extent (Bitner 1990; Koernig & Page 2002; Söderlund & Julander 2009; Winsted 2000). Therefore, the physical appearance of the service

staff is a variable that demands attention for its role in guest experiences Berscheid and Walster (1974).

This study examines the hotel reception servicescapes as an integral part of the guest's overall experience with the hotel reception. Although the guest spends less time in the reception area relative to their total time spent in the hotel, the guest experience of the reception servicescape has a significant influence on their overall experience in the hotel.

The servicescape fulfils a range of strategic goals in the marketing and managing of service. First, it serves as a 'package' for a service organisation by portraying the overall image and indicating the usage and reasonable service experience. When customers purchase products, a package to cover the actual product is required. This package presents a particular identity and provoke the emotions of the customer. Just like the package of tangible products, the physical surrounding of a company actually 'wraps' the service. The package plays a significant role in forming expectations and perceptions (Zeithaml & Bitner 1996).

Further, the servicescapes assume a facilitating role by either assisting or hampering staff and customers' ability to perform their respective activities in co-creating an experience (Bitner 1992; Parish, Berry, & Lam 2008). The servicescape acts as a promotor to encourage and nurture specific forms of social interaction among and between staff and customers (Bitner 1992). Depending on the designed settings, it facilitates efficient or inefficient performance. A well-designed service setting causes the service experience to be pleasant from both the customer's and the staff's perspective, while an inefficient design may produce frustration (Zeithaml & Bitner 1996).

The physical environment creates service differentiation in signalling the intended segment of the market, positioning the firm and showing distinctiveness from competitors (Bitner 1992). Again, the servicescape is able to act as a differentiator within the organisation itself. For instance, the luxuriousness of seats on an aeroplane differentiates the business class from the economy class (Zeithaml & Bitner 1996).

Further, the servicescape may also impact ultimate satisfaction with the service performance (Bitner 1990; Brunner-Sperdin & Peters 2009; Harrell, Hutt, & Anderson 1980), and even influence staff's motivation, satisfaction and productivity (Davis 1984). According to Ariffin, et al. (2013), the servicescape can have a positive impact on the patronage intentions of customers.

Furthermore, the physical environment of an organisation can act as a socializer. The design of an organisation's physical surroundings can clarify roles, behaviours and relationships of customers and

staff. The design of the facilities in an organisation can show in which parts of the servicescape staff only are allowed (for example, the back of the reception desk). This conveys the role distinction between customers and staff (Zeithaml & Bitner 1996).

The servicescapes of hotels influence guest perceptions, satisfaction and the overall experience of the guest (Poria, et al. 2011; Walls et al. 2011; Walls 2013; Worsfold, et al. 2016). This is because the servicescape is the service environment in which service experiences take place (Dong & Siu 2013; Siu, Wan, & Dong 2012) and are co-created and consumed. This can influence staff performance and future patronage decisions of guests. Therefore, to gain a complete understanding of hotel reception experiences, the current study includes an examination of the role of servicescapes in co-creating service experiences.

The literature on servicescapes has been focused mainly on western economies, nevertheless, the concept should be applicable to a developing country context given the service setting of an organisation is critical to the experience (Adzoyi, & Klutse 2015). The hotel front desk represents the relevant servicescape and, by extension, can even stand in for the entire destination. Further, there is a link between the social dimension of the servicescape and the co-creation of experiences. For example, the Ghanaian culture of human interactions, art forms and music is a prominent feature in the provision of hospitality and tourism to guests (see section 2.2).

3.4.1 Servicescape dimensions

Bitner (1992) proposed a framework for understanding servicescapes. The framework describes the synergy of specific physical factors observed by both customers and staff whose responses to the environment may be cognitive, emotional or physiological. The outcome of these internal responses influences the behavioural intentions of customers and staff, which influence the social interactions created between them. This then leads to other behavioural responses such as approach/avoidance actions, staying longer, and re-patronage (Bitner 1992; Wakefield & Blodgett, 1996).

Further, other researchers such as Wakefield and Blodgett (1996) built on Bitner (1992) servicescape framework by studying the influence the perceived quality of the servicescape has on customer satisfaction. Their study evaluated the layout accessibility, facility aesthetics, electronic equipment, seating comfort, and cleanliness of the servicescapes. They hypothesized that customer satisfaction is positively influenced by the perceived quality of the servicescape, which then influences behavioural intentions such as how long customers choose to remain in the service setting and if they plan to re-purchase from the organisation (Wakefield & Blodgett 1996) .

Further, Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) built on these earlier models which is discussed next.

3.4.1.1 Expanded Servicescape.

While Bitner (1992) model is important, it has a possible limitation because it originates in environmental psychology which derives from ecology (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011)). According to Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) ecological theory, having been developed in the early 1900s by biologists is predicated on the researcher's ability to collect observable and measurable data. They suggested that while servicescapes comprise objective, measurable, and managerially controlled stimuli that influence consumers, they also include subjective and difficult to measure stimuli that are not managerially controlled but can influence both customer and staff behaviours and outcomes (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). While Bitner (1992) acknowledged that a service setting does contain stimuli from both social and natural dimensions, her focus was predominantly on the factors that are human-made and objectively measurable physical stimuli thus excluding the social and natural stimuli from her explicit model.

However, Bitner (1992) has also indicated that a customers' response to a place's physical dimensions and features could be enhanced by their response to a natural dimension in that servicescape (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). Therefore, Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) expanded Bitner (1992) framework to include three additional dimensions - social, socially symbolic, and natural. This was to broaden the original model by offering the full breadth of environmental stimuli that could influence customer behaviours and social interactions. Figure 3.2 shows this expanded model with four servicescape dimensions and the individual environmental stimuli that are indicators of each dimension. This expanded framework provides managers and researchers with a comprehensive perspective of the collection of environmental stimuli and their relation to the holistic perceived servicescape as potential influencers of consumer and staff responses and behaviours.

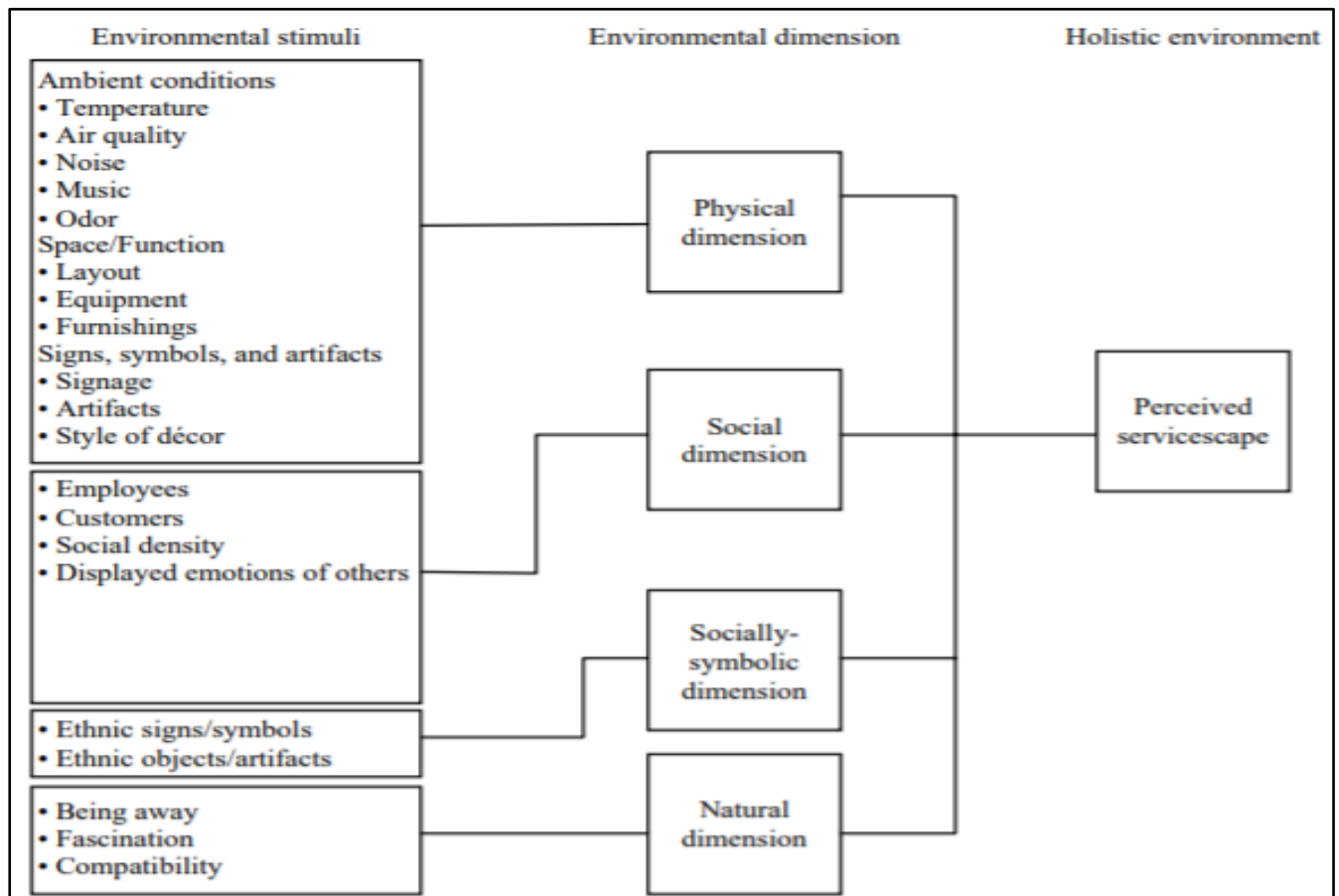


Figure 3.2 Framework for Understanding Four Environmental Dimensions of The Servicescape.

Source: Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011)

3.4.1.1.1. Physical Dimension.

Bitner (1992) was of the view that there are different complexities of servicescape. The physical environment has three main managerial implications regarding service experiences which are: servicescape is a facilitator, as a package and a differentiator. Zeithaml et al. (2009), and Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) suggested that the physical dimension is the easiest dimension to understand because it is observable and measurable. The physical dimension includes all the manufactured, observable, and objectively measured stimuli from Bitner (1992) three dimensions, i.e., ambient conditions, space/function, and signs, symbols, and artefacts. These stimuli are all controlled and can be manipulated by the organisation.

The ambient conditions represent those stimuli that can be identified by any of the five human senses such as the smell, temperature or music in an environment. However, some ambient features, for

example, chemicals and gases, are unnoticeable, yet can influence human behaviour (Farshchi & Fisher 2006; Russell & Snodgrass 1987). Ambient conditions are especially noticeable when they are present in an extreme way; for example, the extremely hot or cold temperature in the physical surroundings of place (Bitner 1992). Examples of ambient conditions are lighting, noise, music, and odour.

Lighting incorporates several variables: brightness, contrast, glare and sparkle, decorative lighting and lighting installation (Custers, De Kort, IJsselsteijn, & De Kruiff 2010). Custers, et al. (2010) suggested that lighting can affect not only emotions, moods, and cognition but also the atmosphere and the spatial impression.

Noise can impact guests in a service environment (Kryter & Jansen 1971). Customer's response to the noisy environment can be by either showing interest or tension. However, noise can provoke a discomfort because of the physiological responses as hypertension due to stress. This physiological stress reaction, even in a normal environmental noise, can be the result of frustration or the feeling that the noise interferes with the activity people are doing. In such an instance, noise is always a potential source of stress through interference with behavioural activities.

Moreover, an overly quiet environment has similar impact on a person. Therefore, low-level background and higher-level background intermittent noise are required. Noise or the absence of noise is not the only factor that can affect levels of stress; other environmental conditions, such as excessive heat or dust in the air are also influential (Kryter & Jansen 1971).

The musical environment was referred to as a 'musicscape' by Jain and Bagdare (2011). Music is an essential part of many studies in the service environment context. Four variables that must be considered regarding music are the volume, the tempo, the style and the absence of it (Sullivan 2002). Among these, volume is the most important factor in Sullivan (2002) views. Also, he explained that it is not the presence of music which is important but the perception of it; in particular, the music must fit with the environment and with the *activities* performed (or co-created) in that setting. But music can also distract consumers and so reducing its quality and effectiveness. Hence, background music is used to produce some specific attitudes and behaviours among consumers and staff (Milliman 1982).

Smells can facilitate the experience of different emotions (sadness, monotony) or have a comforting effect (happiness, contentment, pleasure). They can also bring memories to mind or relieve stress. Customers can unconsciously associate a good or a bad feeling with odours. The sense of smell drives human behaviours, and that a pleasant smell can improve mood (Schiffman & Williams 2005).

Within the servicescapes, there are non-human elements such as spatial layout and functionality. These elements have an impact on human cognition, emotion and behaviour (Zijlstra & Mobach 2011). The spatial layout' is the arrangement of physical machinery, equipment, and furniture within the physical environment of an organisation. The ability of these elements to contribute to effective performance and goal achievement is known as 'functionality'. The association of space and function is considered as the 'designscape'. The designscape must be well organised since it helps customers to understand the environment and to know if the place can enable them to have their experience. Concerning staff, the organization of the front desk has a great influence on the efficiency of their performance. Besides, when the tasks are complex to perform or need to be done within a short time, the spatial layout and functionality are important to both staff and customers (Bitner 1992).

The signs, symbols, and artefacts refer to the physical signals (tangible objects) that an organisation set up within the servicescape, which can be seen by both the customers and staff. This communicates general information about the organisation and the service environment, including the style of the décor. 'Signage' is a non-human element which is a part of the communication tools used by the organisation to facilitate (staff and customers)' movement through the servicescape. The physical environment, the perceived quality and the physical goods provided to customers helps organisations to create a relationship with the customers (Brady & Cronin Jr 2001). Design and layout should be focused on maximizing the positive and meaningful impact for the customer (Zijlstra & Mobach 2011). For example, a 'no smoking' sign in an area can communicate a rule of behaviour (Wener & Kaminoff 1983).

Moreover, artwork, the quality of the materials used, and photographs are all able to create symbolic thoughts and contribute to the organisation's image. Signs, symbols and artefacts are essential to forming a good impression for customers and staff. Also, this dimension can be used for communicating new services. These visible items (the signs, symbols, and artefacts) are of great value for the organisation to differentiate itself from its competitors (Bitner 1992).

3.4.1.1.2. Social Dimension.

The social dimension includes four elements which are; staff, customers, social density and displayed emotions by others. Customers' behavioural responses and decisions towards the organisation are influenced by social and human-generated stimuli (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). Social cues in the service setting are significant information sources used by consumers to gain knowledge of the hospitality brand (Garmaroudi, King & Lu 2021). Tombs & McColl-Kennedy 2003) conceptualize a 'social servicescape' as comprising customer and staff elements that are encapsulated in a

consumption setting. However, the social dimension of servicescape embraces the customers' relationship with the place itself (Johnstone 2012).

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Literature suggests that consumers often patronize certain businesses because of the caring experience they receive from frontline staff who can connect with them personally and emotionally (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). Customers within servicescapes can also influence each other through their interactions with one another (Lin, et al. 2020). This interaction can enhance customers' perceived satisfaction and nullify any experiences that might have otherwise been perceived as negative (Nicholls 2010). It can also work the other way around making experiences that might have been perceived as neutral, or even positive, be seen in a more negative light. Displayed emotions of others refer to the emotional contagion of the servicescape; meaning when consumers are engaged in private consumption, they will most likely be affected by the emotions of others, even if they are not aware of it. However, if consumers are engaged in such activities as dining or exercising that is, group consumption they will notice and potentially respond either positively or negatively to the emotions displayed by others (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy 2003).

3.4.1.1.3 Symbolic Social Dimension

The symbolic social dimension refers to when the organisation purposely and strategically displays signs, symbols, and artefacts with social meanings. The rationale is to influence the approach/avoidance decisions of specific groups of customers by notifying them that they are amongst others that support the same causes and beliefs (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). The symbolic social dimension is exhibited through artwork, colours in which a facility is painted, or flags and artefacts that are displayed to create a sense of unification amongst the organisation's clients. The use of this dimension also influences the customers' willingness to return, stay longer and express positive feedback regarding the organisation's service environment experience.

3.4.1.1.4 Natural Dimension.

The natural dimension draws from the research in psychology and medical sciences concerning the influence of natural stimuli on human health. Baron, Patterson, Oakes, Harris, and Rosenbaum (2009) used Attention Restoration Theory (ART) to study servicescape stimuli within a natural dimension. ART was previously explored in natural and environmental psychology (Kaplan 1995). Kaplan (1995) mentioned features of all and any environments that would be conducive to attention restoration. They pointed out that natural environments have many of these features (Kaplan 1995). But the theory can apply to non-natural (human-designed and built) environments. According to Baron, et al. (2009) now it is thought that restorative properties might also exist in commercial servicescapes. Attention restoration theory (ART) suggests that humans become mentally fatigued following long hours of concentrated efforts on tiring tasks (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). ART suggests that environments which have restorative stimuli can relieve symptoms linked to attention fatigue and restore people's ability to focus. Such settings include being away, fascination and compatibility (Han 2007; Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). The stimulus of being away, helps people to relax and temporarily feel they have journeyed to another place. Natural settings tend to create this response without the person being in the destination. Fascination refers to the ability of a servicescape to capture and keep a person's attention (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). Compatibility is the servicescapes capacity to allow consumers to satisfy their needs within the environment without struggle, embarrassment, and with ease (Kaplan 1995; Rosenbaum & Montoya 2007).

Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) expanded Bitner (1992) servicescape framework with the (above) three dimensions (Figure 3.3). Their servicescape theory focuses on the human-centred elements of a servicescape (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). The stimuli that inhabit the additional dimensions extend the theory by suggesting that servicescape can positively impact customer's approach/avoidance behaviours. To achieve that, there is the need to provide an environment for social; staff-to-customer and customer-to-customer interactions; acceptable densities; staff and customer expressed emotions; attracting specific groups, and restoring mental fatigue symptoms.

3.4.2 Servicescape impact on consumers' behaviour

Bitner (1992) argued that there are different types of responses to servicescape (see Figure 3.1). The three different ways consumers can respond to their physical environment are cognitive, emotional and physiological. Servicescape is an element of nonverbal communication (Bitner 1992). Li (2021) indicated that the "substantive and communicative servicescapes have positive effects on customers'

cognitive, affective, and behavioural engagements". As indicated earlier, the displayed emotion of others may give rise to an emotional response from consumers. Rosenbaum and Massiah (2011) described the servicescapes' potential for emotional contagion and suggested that consumers are sensitive to the emotional cues of other consumers or staff in a service environment. Displayed emotions influence consumers affective states and consequently, their cognitive and behavioural responses (Tombs & McColl-Kennedy 2003). For instance, many cues can be a positive emotion from another customer or staff member. Actions such as smiling, greeting, thanking, making eye contact or using a pleasant vocal tone are elements that can create a positive emotion (Kim & Kim 2012). However, individuals exhibiting these types of positive cues may put others in the same emotional state as theirs (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). This kind of positive emotion can be an opportunity for a business organisation. First, because the positive emotional state of people in a place can influence the approach or avoidance decision of a consumer (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). Second, the emotional contagion of a positive emotional state may increase the customer's willingness to both return and recommend the place (Kim & Kim 2012). However, since consumers may interpret cues in different ways, a response to a displayed emotion can also be negative (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011).

In the context of servicescapes, the cognitive response is the influence of the environment on customers' beliefs about the place or the products/service they experience. Servicescape gives the nature of the service provided, by the aesthetic of the environment but also by the physical goods (Bitner 1992; Hightower 2003). Hence, a servicescape may help customers to categorize an organisation. For example, the uniform of staff or the design of furniture in boutique hotels enables the guest to categorize the hotel. Perceptions regarding these physical elements lead to either positive or negative beliefs about the environment itself, as well as the people and products (Bitner 1992).

Servicescapes can also provoke an emotional response (Bitner 1992; Zeithaml et al., 2009). Literature indicates that there are two dimensions to emotional responses: (1) pleasure or displeasure and (2) degree of arousal (Bitner 1992). Pleasure can be described as feeling good in the place and arousal as feeling excited or stimulated (Sullivan 2002). When customers feel pleased in an environment, they are more likely to spend time and money in this environment. The opposite is also true, as customers tend to avoid unpleasant environments. The atmospheric factors such as music, noise, fragrance or colour are powerful in terms of influence on mood, arousal and pleasure or displeasure (Assadi 2012; Ferreira & Oliveira-Castro 2011; Herrington 1996; Sullivan 2002). However, all these emotional reactions depend on customers' interpretations. The perception of the environment and the emotional responses are subjective because each person has their own perception of a servicescape. For example, the same background music could be pleasant for one customer but not for another

(Ferreira and Oliveira-Castro, 2011). Similarly, fragrance, or other servicescape elements, may be interpreted differently. The interpretation may result in an approach or an avoidance response, based on the individual's perception of the environment (Bitner 1992).

Further, servicescapes can trigger physiological responses, as well. Inappropriate temperatures, poor air quality, low lighting or a noisy environment may cause physical discomfort in customers and staff, and then result in a stress state (Kryter & Jansen 1971). All these physical responses may drive customers to adopt avoidance behaviour.

Customers can adopt avoidance behaviour when they have a negative perception of a servicescape. Individuals might want to move away from the place and reduce their participation, which decreases their potential purchase behaviour. This negative experience may provoke some bad reviews from consumers. Unfortunately, individuals tend, disproportionately, to share bad experiences rather than positive ones (Bennett, 2014). An unpleasant servicescape tends to be avoided by customers. Hence, it should be a priority for organisations to create, manage and improve their servicescape (Hightower, 2003).

3.4.3 Servicescape in the hotel

The servicescape is present in every service-related business and plays an important role. However, the influence of servicescape components may differ from one business organisation to the other and between hospitality firms. Businesses operating in the hospitality industry put much emphasis on servicescape elements, such as ambience, service, design and décor, to remain competitive within the industry. Nevertheless, communicative elements, such as politeness and understanding, also are important for a hotel to differentiate itself from its competitors (Durna, Dedeoglu, & Balikcioglu 2015).

While the same hotel might attract types of guests who will stay at this particular hotel for different reasons, all these hotel guests are individuals and therefore will have different interests, expectations, experiences and personality characteristics. For instance, a hotel might be checking-in a guest who is tired and moody because of tiring journey. All hotel guests are different from each other and have individual intentions and expectations. Therefore, ensuring all hotel guests are pleased and satisfied may be quite hard for the management of the hotel to achieve (Ariffin and Maghzi 2012).

To summarise, the servicescape has four main dimensions: physical; social; social symbolic; and natural. Elements that constitute servicescapes include, but are not limited to, music, odours, noise, layout, types of equipment, air quality, temperature, and the displayed emotion of staff and customers. It has been found that servicescapes influence customers' evaluation of the service

experience and the image of the organisation. This provokes different responses: emotional, cognitive and physiological. Servicescapes can also affect moods, attitudes and beliefs about a place, which can lead to a positive or a negative experience. A positive reception experience may have a positive impact on consumers' behaviour; it can create arousal, or joy and can influence the overall reception experience. Moreover, a servicescape acts as a facilitator, a differentiator and a package for customer experiences. By understanding the effects of atmospheric cues and other elements of servicescape, hoteliers can make efforts to create positive reception experiences.

The above summary highlights how synergies between the three theoretical foundations used in this study can be envisaged. The experience economy concept has its roots in drama terminology describes business organisations focusing on the creation of staged experiences, Pine and Gilmore (1999) use a metaphor 'work is a theatre'. In this way, staff become actors, and consumers become the audience, while the physical environment is the setting. The stage for these performances has been referred to as the servicescape. The success of a hotel service experience is therefore dependent on the connection of the staff and guest (co-creation) and the disposition of the guest to engage in the project of the hotel experience offered (Alcántara-Alcover, et al. 2013; Walls 2013). Within the context of hotels, the dimensions of guest service experiences comprise the human interaction with fellow guests and employees, the physical environment and the personal characteristics of guests (Ariffin, et al. 2013; Brien, Ratna, & Boddington 2012; Walls, et al. 2011). In this way, both staff and guest co-construct the experience through active participation, which involves both the guest and staff emotionally, intellectually, and physically (Mossberg 2007). The production and consumption of these experiences also take place within a complex cultural milieu, shaped by the cultural experiences of the staff and guests, and within a wider destination context.

3.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided comprehensive theoretical context and support for this study. Three theories form the basis of the study: experience economy, co-creation, and servicescapes. The assumption is that experiences are co-created between the guest and staff within the physical setting the servicescapes of a service organisation. Given human interactions are necessary for experiences to be co-created, key players in the co-creation of the experiences include the guest, staff and managers of the hotel. Shedding light on how co-creation of experiences occurs when people are from radically different cultural backgrounds is important, as the trend in the increasingly globalised tourism industry is increasing numbers of tourists travelling internationally.

Nonetheless, there is little specific research that makes use of these three theories to study hotel reception experiences. The extensive review of literature on these theories demonstrates that, independently, each of the theories of the experience economy, co-creation and servicescapes plays a crucial role in creating guest experiences. However, nothing has been found that combines the three theories to study reception experiences, particularly within a developing country context.

While research on guests' and tourists' experiences has focused predominantly on developed countries, it is time for such research to be extended to developing countries. This extension is particularly urgent given the contribution of developing countries to the overall global tourism development. The next chapter explains the methodology that was used to achieve that aim.

Chapter 4

Research Methodology

4.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to explore the hotel reception experience and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders (guests, receptionists, Front Office Managers, and General Managers) in this experience within a developing economy's (Ghana) context. This chapter discusses the methods, and also provides a rationale for the approach and the method used. To achieve the research aim, and to answer the research question, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for different stakeholders of the reception experience.

This chapter commences with an overview and justification for the research design. It explains the rationale for the use of both quantitative and qualitative approach. The chapter describes the research setting and also explains the choice of the research instrument, the target population, the sample selection, and the procedure for data collection. The methods used for data entry and analysis are also discussed. A discussion on the limitations and challenges of conducting this research concludes the chapter. A major challenge was the difficulty in recruiting hotels, guests, staff and managers as participants for this study, especially within the five star-hotel categories.

4.2 Research Positionality

The biases of a researcher can affect data collection and interpretations (for example, qualitative research). To alleviate any form of bias, there is the need for the person researching to acknowledge it.

My position in this research is based on my work experiences from the hotel industry, as a teacher in hospitality, and as a hotel guest. These experiences motivated me to investigate hotel reception experience from various stakeholders' perspectives. From personal experiences, I understand the hotel reception experiences from the lens of both the host and the guest. However, I lack any understanding of how stakeholders from different socio-cultural backgrounds perceive the hotel reception experience.

Regarding the broader research context, I am a Ghanaian woman who grew up and studied in Ghana; therefore, I was able to gain insights from an 'insider' or emic perspective, although still from my particular, individual viewpoint given my life history, education, etc. I have an understanding of the

cultural expectations and values of Ghanaians such as what is important and emphasised during interactions. This was helpful in interviewing many of my participants. Having said that, not all the participants were Ghanaians. In this regard, my experiences as an international student at Lincoln University provided some preparation for me to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, which was critical to the data collection process.

In a developing country characterised by power-distance relationships, there was a power gap between the managers and me as well as the receptionists and me. I considered these inequalities during data collection and data interpretation. I 'broke the ice' with my participants by talking about my background and experiences, why I was undertaking such research and how my research was potentially going to benefit the hotel industry in Ghana.

I engaged in self-reflection and reflexivity to reduce my personal biases in the co-construction of knowledge between the participants and me during the data collection. I read notes taken during the interview to gain an understanding of the responses of the participants from their points of view whilst being aware of my personal biases.

4.3 Research Design

This section discusses the research design for the study and consists of two sub-sections. The first sub-section explains the methodology employed in the study to answer the research questions and the justification for each method used. The second sub-section presents an overview of the study setting and the reasons for choosing the study area.

4.3.1 Research methodology

Research strategies that researchers could adopt for a study include quantitative research, qualitative research, and mixed-method research. The mixed-method approach describes a research strategy that adopts more than one type of research method in a study (Johnson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner 2007). Mixed-methods has been defined by Tashakkori and Creswell, (2007, p4) as "research in which the investigator collects and analyses data, integrates the findings and draws inferences using both qualitative and quantitative approaches or methods in a single study". Though each of the broad types of method has its strengths and limitations, adopting mixed method research can help to understand important complexities of the social phenomena. Using both qualitative and quantitative research methods helps complement each method (Ivankova, & Wingo 2018). By adopting mixed methods researchers can address complex research questions and "find answers to both exploratory and

confirmatory questions within a single study and reveal a fuller picture of the problem” (Ivankova, & Wingo, 2018, p180).

A mixed-method approach was adopted for this study, and both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for different respondent groups. In the view of Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2009), a researcher can choose to combine data collection techniques and procedures using some form of multiple methods design. The choice of multiple methods is useful to provide a better opportunity to answer the research questions and to allow to evaluate better the extent to which the research findings can be trusted and inferences made from them (Teddle & Tashakkori 2003). Examples of studies who used these multiple methods in hospitality and tourism in their research are; Ariffin, et al. (2013), in Malaysia, Antony, Jiju Antony, and Ghosh (2004), in the United Kingdom, and Poku, Zakari, and Soali (2013), in Ghana.

A qualitative research method allows the researcher to explore and describe the phenomenon and to provide a cohesive summary of issues, or events (Sandelowski 2000, 2000b). The qualitative part of this research sought to explore and understand the various views of stakeholders who are involved in the hotel reception experience and to interpret the meanings given to them by respondents. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggested that qualitative researchers study a phenomenon in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret the phenomena in terms of the meaning people bring to them. According to Quinlan (2011), this form of study helps the researcher to capture participants’ understanding of their complex world and comprehend their perspective of a particular phenomenon.

A quantitative research method allows extensive data collection, more often through questionnaires and the use of descriptive and inferential statistics (Babbie 2016; Quinlan 2011; Saunders, et al. 2009). It permits relatively cost-effective data collection as primary data can be collected from a large population in a relatively short space of time (Babbie 2016). According to Babbie (2016, p. 127), “surveys are also excellent vehicles for measuring attitudes and orientations.” Furthermore, the reliability and validity of the research instrument can be assessed objectively. Quantitative data was gained from a questionnaire survey to identify the demographic characteristic of the guest, their perception regarding the hotel reception experience.

4.3.2 Development of instrument (interview and questionnaire structure)

Given the above commentary, interviews were the most appropriate research method. Interviews can be classified as a) Structured; b) Narrative; and c) Semi-structured (Saunders, et al. 2009). For this

study, a structured and narrative interview approach are not ideal, as a structured interview approach requires a rigid, predetermined set of criteria with limited response categories, and restricts the participants from elaborating on issues. Narrative interviews can result in a lengthy discussion and analysing the research themes may be wide, making it difficult for analysis; for this research, a semi-structured interview approach was used. Mutch (2005) stated that for semi-structured interviews, a group of questions is followed in an open-ended manner which gives the participant enough opportunity to express his/her opinion. I prepared an interview guide for my data collection. The wording and the order of questions are not static during the interview process, as the interviewer can decide the order in which to ask the questions. The content of the interview highlights the significant issues of the research. This flexibility allows the interviewer to improvise subsequent questions and inquire more for a meaningful explanation as well as to expand more on areas of interest that emerge. Since the purpose of this research is to critically explore the hotel reception experience and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in this experience, I used in-depth semi-structured interviews to obtain the data.

I developed a semi-structured interview guide (refer to Appendix D2-4) based on literature and used it in conversations with each of the receptionist and managers in the selected hotels. Bryman (2004) referred to semi-structured interviews as an interviewer having an established set of questions but is able to alter its order and even ask additional questions in response. The questionnaire was useful as some questions lead to others. Also, in the course of the participants explaining some answers were provided for some questions yet to be asked. In effect, the questions did not follow the sequence on the interview guide, and additional information was acquired through probing questions. According to Gribich (1999), the choice of this type of interview will give room to explore other relevant areas of the topic being researched. Face-to-face interviews are important to build rapport with the participants and also help to probe further to understand their viewpoint.

A structured self-complete questionnaire (refer to appendix D1), with some open-ended questions, was used to explore the hotel reception experience from the perspectives of the customer. As was the case with the interview guide, the development of this questionnaire was informed by the literature review. The first set of questions were open-ended and asked the general perception of guests of different aspects of the hotel reception experience. It included questions about what guest like about the experience, which solicits a detailed explanation from guests. The second section was based on guest expectations of the hotel reception experience. A list of items on hotel reception and servicescape was provided, and guests were asked to state how important each element is to them on a scale of 1-7, with 1 representing 'not at all important' and 7 representing 'extremely important.'

This comprises items such as warm welcome at reception, accurate guest records, guest treatment with respect, professional appearance and attributes of the receptionist, the ambience, décor, layout and physical facility of the front desk. The third section asked guests to rate the performance of the hotel on all elements of the reception experience on a scale of 1-7, with 1 representing 'not at all important' and 7 representing 'extremely important.' The last part collects socio-demographic information about guests, including gender, age, the purpose of the trip, nationality, and travel experience.

4.3.3 Research setting

The study was conducted within three, four, and five-star international and domestic hotels in Accra, Ghana (Figure 4.1.) I chose three, four and five-star hotel based on the rationale that they are *full-service*. Full-service hotels provide an opportunity for more guest interaction at the hotel reception while also offering the potential to explore how hotel characteristics affect the reception experience. These hotels also have fully functional and well-structured front offices, which is relevant to guest service experiences. The study was conducted in Accra because it is the capital of Ghana, and it has an international airport serving as the gateway to the country. Accra is the seat of government, and serve as a business hub with a greater majority of hotels under the category being studied. On the practical side, Accra was chosen because of accessibility, and the necessary logistics support during the fieldwork. Therefore, the most logical place to conduct this research is hotels in Accra. Apart from that, other factors that were put into consideration was cost and time. Further details of the context of the study are given in Chapter Two.



Figure 4.1 The Map of Accra

Source: <https://www.mapsofworld.com/ghana/accra.html>

4.4 Research process

This section discusses the research process of the study and begins by explaining the population and sampling, how participants were recruited, and profiles of participants. It then proceeds to describe the data collection instrument used and how the data was collected.

4.4.1 Population and sampling

Given it was not possible to involve every hotel in this research, I adopted a purposive sampling method (Babbie 2016), but the difficulty in recruiting hotels was an issue, particularly amongst 5-star international hotels. Hence only one 5-star domestic hotel was used for this study because they granted access to the researcher. The two international 5-star hotels did not give access to the researcher because their Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) does not allow an external person to contact their guests. Their reason is that it will cause discomfort to the guests, especially at check-in, where guests might be tired on arrival from long flights. The 4-star hotels used for the study were four, two international and two domestic hotels out of seven 4-star hotels contacted by the researcher. Ten three-star hotels with more than a hundred rooms were selected within the central business district of Accra, because of its proximity to the international airport. These hotels were numbered (1-10), and six were randomly selected. Out of the six, only three gave their permission to use their facilities for the study. Establishments were selected to get a mix of domestically and internationally operated/owned hotels, a total of four each (4 domestic and 3 international) across all categories. The general managers were contacted via telephone to arrange for the date and time for the interview and questionnaire administration.

In total, seven hotels were finally involved in this study (one 5-star domestic hotel, two 4-star international hotels, two 4-star domestic hotels, two 3-star international hotels, and one 3-star domestic hotel) (see Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Sample of hotels used for the study

Participant hotels	N ^o of hotels
5-star Domestic hotel	1
4-star Domestic hotel	2
4-star International	1
3-star Domestic hotel	1
3-star International hotel	2
Total	7

I identified potential hotels and their contact details through the hotels' directory published by the Ghana Tourism Authority. I sent emails to seek permission from the managers of potential hotels to be used as case study sites. I attached Research Information sheets to the emails (refer to appendix B1-4). When permission was granted to use the hotel for the study, I arranged a date for the data collection with the hotel managers who notified the staff.

The participants in the study were stakeholders in the hotel reception experience, including Front Office Managers, General Managers, and Receptionists, (aged 18yrs+) who were either nationals or migrants, and hotel guests. Front Office Managers were included in the study because they oversee the general administration of the department which includes supervision of staff (receptionists) (Baker, et al. 2000; Bardi 2007) and therefore have a role to play in the reception experience. The receptionist co-creates the experiences, which, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999), represents the performance. Hotel Managers formulate strategies and ensure the strategic goals of the hotel are met. The hotel guest experiences are formulated into the hotel's strategy. These managers were the ones contacted before access to the staff and guests was granted. In exploring hotel reception experiences, the role of the reception staff is key to this study. The hotel front office is staffed by various personnel with different responsibilities or functions; however, only the receptionist was involved in this research.

Finally, this study involved hotel guests. Their participation is essential as the guest is the consumer and an active participant in the experience (Morgan, et al. 2009). Guests (aged 18yrs+) staying in the hotels were selected if they were visitors to the city, visiting for business or leisure, and checked-in by the receptionist. The only potential participants who were excluded were people who are not able to understand English well enough to give competent, informed consent, and local guests (from Accra).

4.4.2 Profile of hotels

The hotels which participated in the study are broadly categorised into domestic and international branded hotels. The ownership of the hotels was different; some of the hotels were owned by local individuals, local groups, foreign individuals, and the Social Security and National Insurance Trust (under the government of Ghana). The management of the hotels also varied and included: owner management, management contract, and Franchise. The main clientele of the hotels is business travellers. The exceptions to the aforementioned is that of 'Accor' branded hotels where more guests were from Francophone countries; if the hotel is Chinese branded there were more guests from China; and if it is American branded hotel there were more Americans. The total number of hotel rooms ranges from 109 to 196, while the total number of staff ranges from 99 to 250, out of which the

number of receptionists is between 8 to 20 (see Table 4.2). The average rate of a hotel room per night is 900 to 2,700 Ghana Cedis (\$NZD300.00 – \$NZD900.00). Further details on the characteristics of the participants are found in Chapter Five, section 5.2 and Chapter Six, section 6.2.

Table 4.2 Profile of hotels

Hotel	Star rating & brand	Ownership	Management	No. of rooms	No. of staff	No of receptionists	Main clientele
A	3-star international	Local group ownership	Management contract	192	99	10	Business
B	3-star domestic	A local individual ownership	Owner manager	109	200	10	Business
C	4-star Domestic	Social Security and Insurance Trust (SSNIT) under the Ghana Government	Management contract	162	256	20	Business and leisure
D	3-star international	Individual foreign ownership	Franchise	168	194	14	Business
E	5-star domestic	Social Security and Insurance Trust (SSNIT) under Ghana Government	Management contract	164	207	8	Business
F	4-star international	Individual foreign ownership	Owner Manager	111	250	15	Business
G	4-star domestic	Local group ownership	Local group management	196	200	10	Business and leisure

4.4.3 Data collection method

Data were collected through in-depth interviews and questionnaire completion. Hotel Managers, Front Office Managers and receptionists were interviewed, and guests asked to complete a questionnaire. Data Collection for this study took place from the 8th August to 10th November 2017.

4.3.3.1 In-depth Interviews

The research interviews were conducted individually at a time and place most convenient to each participant receptionists, Front Office Managers, and General Managers. In total twenty-two receptionists, ten Front Office Managers and six hotel General Managers at each of the seven hotels were used for data collection in each of the selected hotels (see Table 4.3)

Table 4.3 Sample of Receptionists and managers

Participants hotels	N ^o of hotels	N ^o of Receptionists	N ^o of Front Office Managers	N ^o of General Managers
5-star Domestic hotel	1	3	2	1
4-star Domestic hotel	2	6	3	1
4-star International	1	3	1	1
3-star Domestic hotel	1	3	1	1
3-star International hotel	2	7	3	2
Total	7	22	10	6

The Receptionists and managers were recruited face-to-face. I approached them at a time that did not interfere with their work, and those who agreed to participate were interviewed. The receptionists were approached at the front desk (see Figure 4.2).

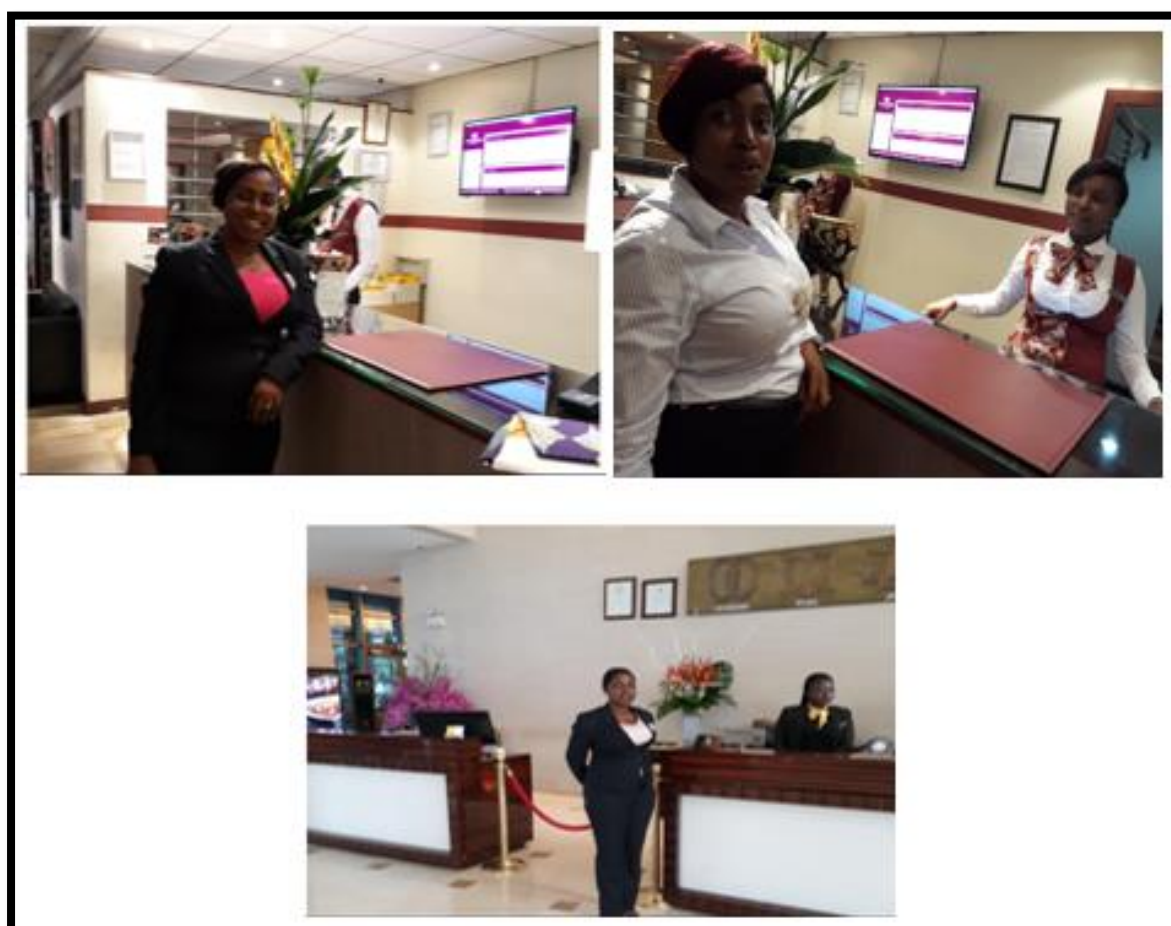


Figure 4.2 Interaction with receptionists during data collection

Source: Researchers photos with permission

At the same time, the Front Office Managers, and General Managers were approached in their offices. I explained the general nature of the research to them and asked them if they would like to take part as respondents. To get informed consent, I informed each participant of the study about the purpose, nature, methods, and use of the research as well as assuring them of anonymity and confidentiality (Saunders, et al. 2009). I assured the receptionists that managers would not know what they said in the interview.

Hard copies of the Research Information Sheet (refer to appendix B1-4) which was attached to the initial emails was made available to them. The receptionists, Front Office Managers, and General Managers were given time to read through, and any questions they had were answered to their satisfaction. Those who agreed to participate were then asked to sign the consent form and granted an interview (refer to Appendix C).

I sought permission from the participants to audio-record the interview. Some agreed, some preferred not to be recorded. With their permission, notes were taken for those who declined the audio recording. The duration of the interview lasted for approximately 30 - 40 minutes. I transcribed the interviews alongside data collection and at the end of the fieldwork (this is further expanded in Section 4.4.).

The introduction to the interviews involved asking questions related to general information about the interviewee to establish a relationship and make him/her feel relaxed and comfortable with the interviewer. Spradley (1979) emphasised that such questions are useful in starting a research conversation. The interview guide included questions on how long receptionists have worked with the hotels, their roles/responsibilities, what they like about their job, and what they find challenging about the job. Spradley (1979) and (Dalton, Daily, & Wimbush 1997) suggested that questions soliciting personal opinions should be held onto and asked during the latter stages of the interview. The second part sought information on the reception experience from the perspective of the receptionists. This set of questions asked the staff about the most important part of the reception experience and how their roles contribute to memorable experiences for guests (refer to appendix D2 for interview guide). The interview with the receptionist took place at different venues of each of the various hotels; back office, lobby, and conference room.

I observed some receptionists who agreed to participate in the research were nervous at the beginning of the interview which might mean they were afraid of managers concerning what they were going to say, though they were informed that managers would not know what they did say. However, they

became more relaxed with the introductory question about themselves and why they chose their professions.

The interview for Front Office Managers started with asking general questions such as the number of years they have worked in the hotel, positions they held before assuming the role of the Front Office Manager, and the challenges they faced in performing their duties. Questions that were asked also included; their role in the job, their relationship with the receptionists, what they look for in a receptionist before hiring them, and the role of the receptionists in creating reception experience (refer to appendix D3 for interview guide).

The interview for Hotel Managers was made up of questions on the ownership and management structures of the hotel, servicescapes, guest characteristics, staffing and training, and the check-in process (refer to appendix D4 for interview guide).

3.3.3.2 Guest Questionnaire completion

I distributed and administered the questionnaire to guests in the hotels once they completed check-in procedures, with the permission of the management of the hotel. I approached the guests in the lobby (see Figure 4.3) immediately after experiencing the actual check-in service. This is in order to make sure experiences remain fresh in their minds and are not forgotten, replaced or their perception is not affected by other cognitive values (Otto & Ritchie 1996). The reason is data used for understanding service experiences must be as current as possible to reflect reality. I asked the guests if they would like to take part as respondents. About one-fourth of those I contacted agreed to take part in the study. Those who showed interest in participating were handed the Research Information sheet (Appendix B1). They were given time to read through, and any questions they had were answered to their satisfaction. I gave those who agreed to participate the survey (see Appendix D1) which contains a structured questionnaire, with some open-ended questions to complete during their free time and drop it in a drop box at the reception within 72 hours. The survey was estimated to take 10-15 minutes. It was stated on the questionnaire that when a guest completes the survey it is deemed to be an expression of consent to participation in this research voluntarily. My contact details were given to all the respondents in case they wished to withdraw their data or ask further questions. My supervisors' details were also given to all participants, which allowed respondents to verify my identity.

A sample of 361 respondents completed the questionnaire, out of 479 questionnaires distributed to guests lodging in the selected hotels (six hotels in total) (refer to Table 4.4). This number was sufficient to carry out statistical analysis.

Table 4.4 Sample of Hotel Guests

Participants	N ^o of hotels	N ^o of hotel Guests
Hotels		
5-star Domestic hotel	1	57
4-star Domestic hotel	1	74
4-star International	1	20
3-star Domestic hotel	1	66
3-star International hotel	2	144
Total	6	361

Material removed due to copyright compliance

Source: <https://www.legacyhotels.co.za/hotels/labadi-beach-hotel>

Researcher's photo with permission

4.5 Methods of Data Analysis

This section explains the data analysis for the study and consists of two sections. The first section describes the qualitative data analysis, while the second section explains the analysis of quantitative data.

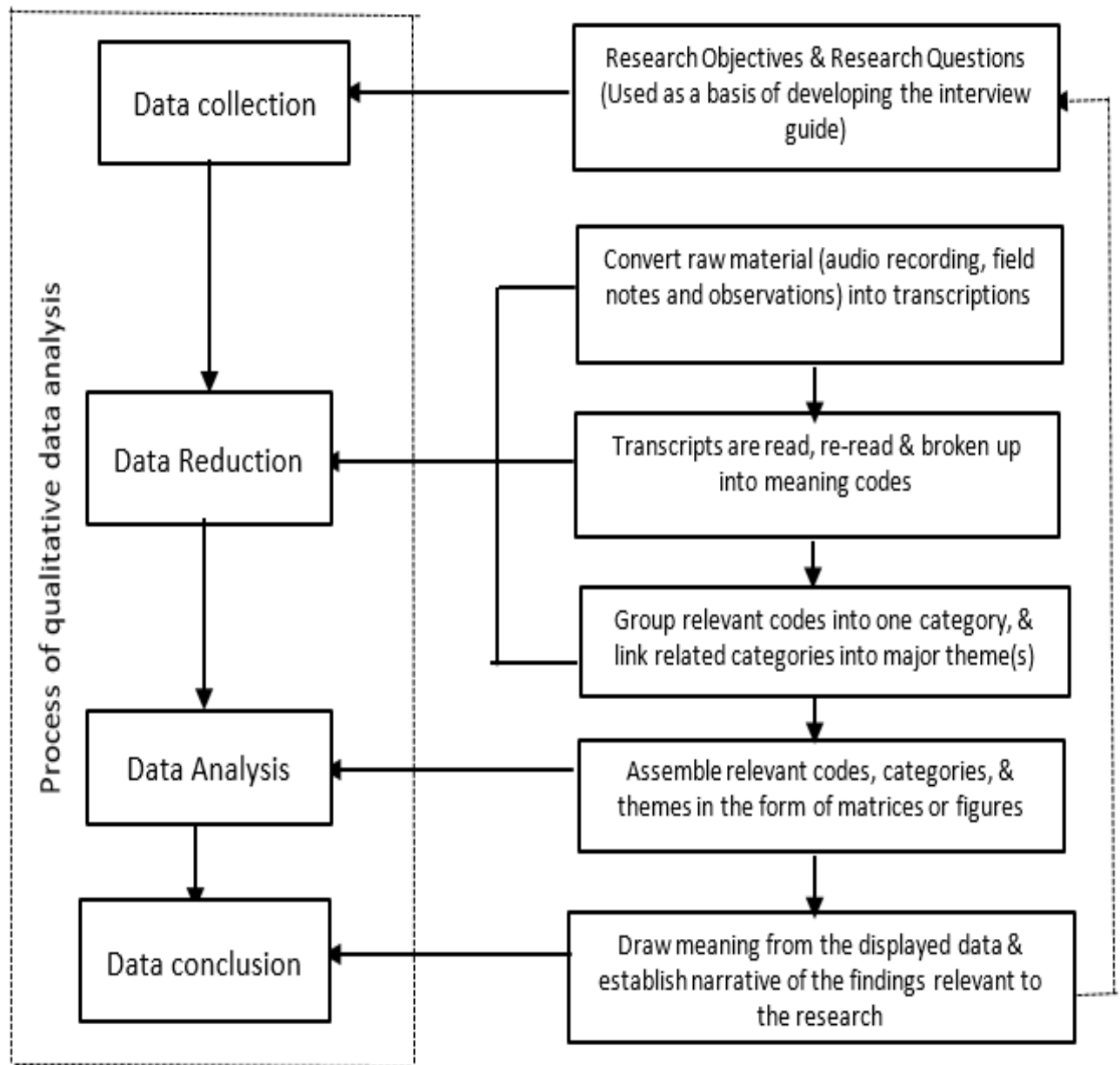


Figure 4.4 Qualitative data analysis process.

Adapted from Leech and Onwuegbuzie (2007); Miles, Huberman, Huberman, and Huberman (1994)

4.5.1 Qualitative Data Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006, p. 80) noted that “data analysis is the process of moving from raw interviews to evidence-based interpretations that are the foundations for the published report.” Some

transcription of interviews took place alongside the collection of data in Ghana and were completed when I returned to New Zealand. The data analysis process occurred when I returned to New Zealand. I used thematic content analysis to analyse qualitative data from transcribed interviews. Thematic analysis is a technique for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within the data (Quinlan 2011) and is an approach similar to content analysis (Hopwood 2004) and grounded theory. It is widely used in qualitative methods (Braun & Clarke, 2006) because it allows researchers to summarise key features of a large body of data and offer rich descriptions of a data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Bryman & Burgess, 1994). The difference between thematic analysis and other forms of analysis is that it searches for patterns in data and it is not theory bound; thus it is flexible within different theoretical frameworks achieving different research goals. Other strengths of thematic analysis include the ability to highlight similarities and differences across data sets, to allow for clear presentation of results; ease of interpretation by most readers; its use for social and psychological interpretations of data; its usefulness in informing policy development; and the possibility of generating unanticipated insights (Bryman & Burgess, 1994).

Generally, there are three main steps for qualitative data analysis (Speziale and Carpenter (2007). These are: first, reading the transcript and formulating thoughts about its meaning for further analysis. Second, structural analysis to identify various themes from the initial reading of the transcript. Data are compared and contrasted to identify patterns that can be meaningfully connected; which is referred to as interpretative reading. Third, there is the generation of an interpretation of the entire data set which involves reflecting on both the initial reading as well as the interpretative reading to ensure a complete and comprehensive understanding of the findings (Speziale and Carpenter (2007).

As indicated earlier, my analysis of the interview data followed the standards of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke 2006). The process involved the following steps: First, the familiarization of the researcher with the data. For the first phase, I transcribed the interview data verbatim, from audio recordings; field notes and observation notes were typed in a word document. The transcripts on my Word document had large margins and adequate line spacing for subsequent coding and making notes based on Gale et al.'s (2013) suggestion. I prepared my database manually (i.e., without using proprietary qualitative analysis software) by creating files on my desktop under the various themes to assist with categorising, sorting, organising, tabulating, storing, and retrieving data for analysis.

During the process of the transcription I became immersed in my data as I re-listened to the audio recordings and read my interview and reflective notes, many times. This immersion in the data ensured some initial ideas and patterns in the data became apparent. In qualitative data analysis familiarization with the interview is a vital stage of data interpretation (Gale, Heath, Cameron, Rashid

& Redwood 2013). Through that process I made analytical notes and wrote initial thoughts and impressions in the margins of the transcript.

Phase two involved the generation of initial codes for each research question. After becoming very familiar with the data, I carefully read the transcript line by line. I printed versions of the transcripts to manually identify themes and initial ideas for the interpretation. I used colour to apply labels (codes) that described what I interpreted in the data as important: “A code in qualitative inquiry is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data” (Saldaña, 2021 p. 5). The aim of coding is to categorise data so that it can be compared systematically with the other parts of the data (Gale, et al. 2013).

The first stage was open coding that is coding any information that might be relevant from as many perspectives as possible. It involves breaking down the data into parts and looking for similarities and differences. I coded the data from receptionists, managers and guests separately before doing a comparative analysis to generate similarities and differences between the perspectives of all stakeholders. I then grouped the codes into categories using colours and came up with themes and sub-themes which are clearly defined. See Table 4.5 for examples of codes and themes.

Table 4.5 Example of themes and codes

Main theme	Sub-theme	codes
Why receptionists chose their job	Interest in interacting with guest	Interacting with guests Contact with guest Meeting guests/people, Meeting people from different cultures Sharing experiences, Human relations
	An interest in serving guests	Attending to peoples’/guests’ need, Enjoy/love serving people/guests, Caring for people Meeting/attending to guests’/people’s needs Satisfying guest Helping people
	Love/like the job	Love the hotel job Like the job Enjoy it
	Personal traits	Friendliness People person Born for the job
	Educational Qualification	Studies in psychology, Studied hospitality management Studied sociology Studied languages

	Cultural exchange	Learn from different cultures People's different behaviours Learn other languages
	Recommendation by family/friend/colleague	Recommended by family Recommended by friends Recommended by colleagues
	By chance	Job offer wanted to try something new It just happened I just applied

Phase three involved combining codes into potential themes and gathering all the data relevant to a specific theme (see Table 4.5). I then gave each theme an appropriate name and listed together sub-themes. Each main theme was described in brief detail before the sub-themes were presented with illustrative quotes from the participants. Then I assigned final themes and sub-themes and structured them in a coherent and a clear way. I then subjected each sub-theme for analysis and personal interpretation. The final stage involved identification, selection, and review of extracts representing themes, relating findings back to the research questions. I developed a summary of the main findings that emerged from the data that accurately captured the essence of the experience under study.

The findings took the form of a coherent descriptive narrative, which represented the multiple voices and perceptions of the participants. The process of my data analysis is presented in the diagram above (Figure 4.4). The findings of this analysis which relate to experience economy, servicescapes, and co-creation of experience, are presented in Chapter Five. There were, however, other findings that were not anticipated. These enlarged the research task and prompted a search for new theoretical insights. These are explored in Chapter Eight. The discussion as to how the findings accord with the research aim and research questions, and research implications, are presented in Chapter Seven, Chapter Eight and Chapter Nine.

I found the whole qualitative data analysis to be a time-consuming process, but doing manual analysis allowed a closer examination of the data and a more rigorous identification of patterns and emerging themes. I used note cards, and pencil to assist the manual analysis of the data, which helped to produce a richer interpretation of the data.

4.5.2 Quantitative Data Analysis

At the end of the fieldwork, data from completed questionnaires that were numeric were coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 23) database. All of the data were entered in numerical form, and further audited to confirm accuracy using the 'frequencies' command. The resulting data were analysed using the SPSS software. Descriptive statistics, mainly using percentage, frequencies, mean and standard deviation, and inferential including Chi-square analysis,

independent sample T-test and one-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA), were used to analyse the data. For analysis and reporting purposes, the data were analysed in parts:

- Demographic profile and travel characteristic of guests
- Differences between travel characteristics of guests,
- Differences between hotel categories.
- Responses to the Likert scales questions
- Inferential statistics— independent *t*-test, and One-way Analysis of Variance test (One-way ANOVA) using Tukey's Significant Difference (HSD) test for posthoc analysis.

The descriptive approach forms the basis of quantitative data analysis, which enables findings to be presented and organised in a manageable form; for instance, value rankings by frequency, percentages, or averages. While descriptive analyses lack the ability to establish any statistical relationships among variables, inferential statistics can aid in giving a richer understanding of findings. For instance, *t*-tests are able to establish significant differences in mean values between dependent variables, while independent *t*-tests and one-way ANOVA assess whether the means of two or more groups of independent variables are statistically different from each other on an interval or ratio-scaled dependent variable.

Regarding the third research question of this thesis which was to establish 'the influence of different characteristics of key stakeholders (guests) on their perceptions and expectations of hotel reception experience, guest demographics/travel characteristics were statistically analysed with One-way Analysis of Variance tests (One-way ANOVA) and an independent-sample T-test. For One-way ANOVA and T-test purposes, guest demographic characteristics functioned as independent variables (IVs), whereas the list of expectation and performance variables functioned as dependent variables (DVs). The One-way ANOVA test indicated evidence of significant differences among some of the variables. Consequently, a Post Hoc (Tukey HSD) test was further conducted to ascertain the actual differences among the groups.

Similarly, regarding the fourth research question, that is, to identify 'the impact of hotel characteristics on expectations and experience of the hotel reception,' an Independent-sample T-test was conducted to measure statistical significance of expectation and experience. For T-test purposes, hotel characteristics (international and domestic), and star rating (3, 4, and 5-star hotels) functioned as independent variables (IVs), whereas the list of expectation and performance variables functioned as dependent variables (DVs). The findings of these analyses are presented in Chapter Six in order of expectation first, followed by experience.

4.6 Research Group Limitation

The main limitation of this research was difficulty in recruiting hotels in Accra, Ghana, to take part in the study. The General Managers of some of the hotels said their Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) does not allow 'outsiders' to talk to their guests or allow guests to complete a questionnaire from an external source. According to them, they have their own guest feedback system. Some hotels said their staff were always busy so cannot make time for the interview. They also said their guests could not take part in the study because contacting them at check-ins will cause discomfort to guests who might be stressed or tired after a long flight.

Others also expressed their fear of competitors seeking information from them under the pretence of conducting research. They also said sometimes staff from the Ghana Tourism Authority also come 'undercover' for inspection. This is the reason why they do not allow people to talk to their staff or guests.

Difficulty in recruiting potential participants was another challenge encountered. Staff and guests approached even in hotels that gave their permission were not willing to take part. Some staff said they were either not interested, busy, or tired. Some guests said they were either busy or tired, and others took the questionnaire but did not return it.

At the end of the interview, some receptionists were happy and thanked me for giving them such an opportunity to be part of the research and to share their experiences. Some staff said they were keen to read the findings of the study or the thesis. Receptionists, who were very nervous, asked about how they performed in the interview even though they had been told earlier about the purpose of the interview. Some staff were hesitant to do the interview, and managers explained that some staff feel intimidated by being interviewed by academics, a cultural issue where people who are more educated are highly respected in Ghana.

While apparently an appropriate location to interview patrons about their hotel experience, the presence of a surveyor in the lobby is likely to encourage staff to perform at a level they might not otherwise do in the absence of a surveyor.

Given the nature of the sample, we must be cautious when we extrapolate these findings beyond the context. For example, we have only one five-star domestic hotel, and so commenting on it, we are referring to that one hotel, and we cannot assume it is for all five-star hotels. I would have liked a spread across all the star ratings.

4.7 Ethical considerations

The process of research that involves human beings must be reviewed to make sure it is carried out ethically (Babbie 2016, p. 62; Quinlan 2011, p. 25-26; Resnik 2015). Social science research often represents an intrusion into people's lives as it often requires potential respondents to reveal information about themselves. Such information may not be known to friends and associates, yet revealed to strangers (researchers) (Babbie 2016; Resnik 2015). Asking respondents to participate in a study also takes some significant amount of their time and energy (Babbie 2016). The data collection process for this study, which includes details of the questionnaire, interview guide, Research Information Sheet, a copy of the email to managers seeking for permission, was submitted to the Human Ethics Committee (HEC) of Lincoln University for approval. Ethics approval was granted before commencing fieldwork (refer to Appendix E).

I made sure ethical standards were adhered to in the execution of the research. These include; fully informing each potential participant about the purpose of the study, what was required of them and the time involved. A copy of the Research Information Sheet was given to each respondent to read through and ask questions, and the fact that their participation was voluntary was emphasised. I assured them anonymity, and participants were also assured that I was the only person who had access to their real names. The participants for the study were all volunteers. None were my intimate partners.

In addition, participants were offered the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time without any penalty. This provision was stated in the Research Information Sheet. Each participant was asked to sign the appropriate consent form, which stated that they had been given full information about the research and had agreed voluntarily to participate in the study.

The purpose of the research was primarily to explore hotel reception experiences in a developing country context. Therefore, the possibility of causing discomfort to participants was not considered significant. Thus, the risk of harm to participants was considered to be minimal.

I asked permission from participants to record the interviews, and the recordings were transcribed by me without using administrative support, thus reducing the chance of personal information being supplied to a third party. In the case of any quotations from interviews used in the research and any related academic publications produced, participants as the source of information will be anonymous, and the names of the hotels are protected. The names of the hotels used in this study are also confidential and known only to me and my supervisors.

Regarding data storage, once all data analyses were completed, the consent forms, original completed questionnaires, recording, and the interview transcripts were stored in a lockable metal filing cabinet for safety purposes with access given only to me. Moreover, for backing-up purpose, these data were scanned and saved on a USB disk.

4.8 Conclusion

By discussing the methods and their conceptual underpinning, this chapter has provided a rationale for the approach and the method used. In this chapter, I discussed the actual research process, including how the research was designed and executed. I adopted a mixed-method approach for this study, and both qualitative and quantitative methods were used for different respondent groups. Semi-structured interviews were used to explore and understand the perceptions of receptionists and managers involved in the provision of hotel reception experiences regarding their role and the experience of guests. At the same time, a structured self-complete questionnaire, with some open-ended questions, was used to explore the hotel reception experience from the perspectives of the customer. Analysis of the research data included thematic analysis for interview data and quantitative data analysed with the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS v. 23) database. Descriptive statistics, mainly using percentage, frequencies, mean and standard deviation, independent sample, and inferential statistics such as independent sample T-test and one-way ANOVA, was used to analyse the data.

The next two chapters (Chapter Five and Chapter Six) present the results from the data that were obtained which relate to experience economy, servicescape, and co-creation of experience. Other findings that were not anticipated are explored in chapter eight. Overall, this chapter has provided detailed information about how the study was designed, carried out, and how data were collected and analysed.

Chapter 5

Hotel reception experience: staff and managers perspective

5.1 Introduction

The results of this thesis are presented in two parts: Part one (this chapter) presents the reception staff's experiences that were gathered from the interviews, and Part two (Chapter Six) reports guests' experiences at the reception gathered from survey data. The findings presented in this chapter provide detailed descriptions of how hotel staff perceived the reception experiences within the context of hotels in Accra, Ghana, a developing country. The chapter is divided into two sections; Section A presents the receptionists' account of their own reception experiences supplemented by the account of their managers, and Section B presents the receptionists' accounts of guests' experiences at the reception supplemented by the account of managers.

5.2 Profile of respondents

The hotel receptionists are frontline service personnel who are situated at the hotel and guest interface. They represent the hotel and engage in face-to-face interactions with the guests. The focus of this section is the hotel receptionists' perception of the hotel reception experiences. The demographic characteristics of receptionists and managers are presented, to include the level of education, years of employment in their current hotels and their nationalities.

5.2.1 Profile of Receptionists

In total, 22 receptionists participated in the interviews. In terms of reporting I used the letter 'P' for a participant, the participant's allocated number and the letter 'R' for each receptionist in order to ensure confidentiality (example: 'P3 R'), 'GM' for General Manager, and FOM' for Front Office Manager. Further information about how these respondents were recruited is presented in the methodology chapter (Chapter Four, section 4.3.3).

The majority of the receptionists were females (77%) with fewer males (23 %) (See Figure 5.1 and Appendix F1). However, there were two contradictory explanations given by the managers regarding the bias towards female staff at the reception. Whereas a few of the managers expressed their desire to have a gender balance at the front desk, they face the challenge of attracting males, so they employ more females to fill the gap. The managers further explained that having only females at the reception also comes with certain challenges, as most of the females will not want to do night shift for the reason

that it is not safe for them to go to their homes upon finishing their shifts. Therefore, females are rostered for morning and afternoon shifts so that they can close by 9pm and go home.

By contrast, a few managers said they deliberately employ women at the reception. Some of the managers captured this sentiment by saying:

“Personally, I will put ladies at the front because I feel ladies have a bit of flair, they are much calmer, more relaxed...” (P13 GM). “... We look for nice people, to be precise nice and beautiful ladies and who have the command over the English Language ...” (P17 GM).

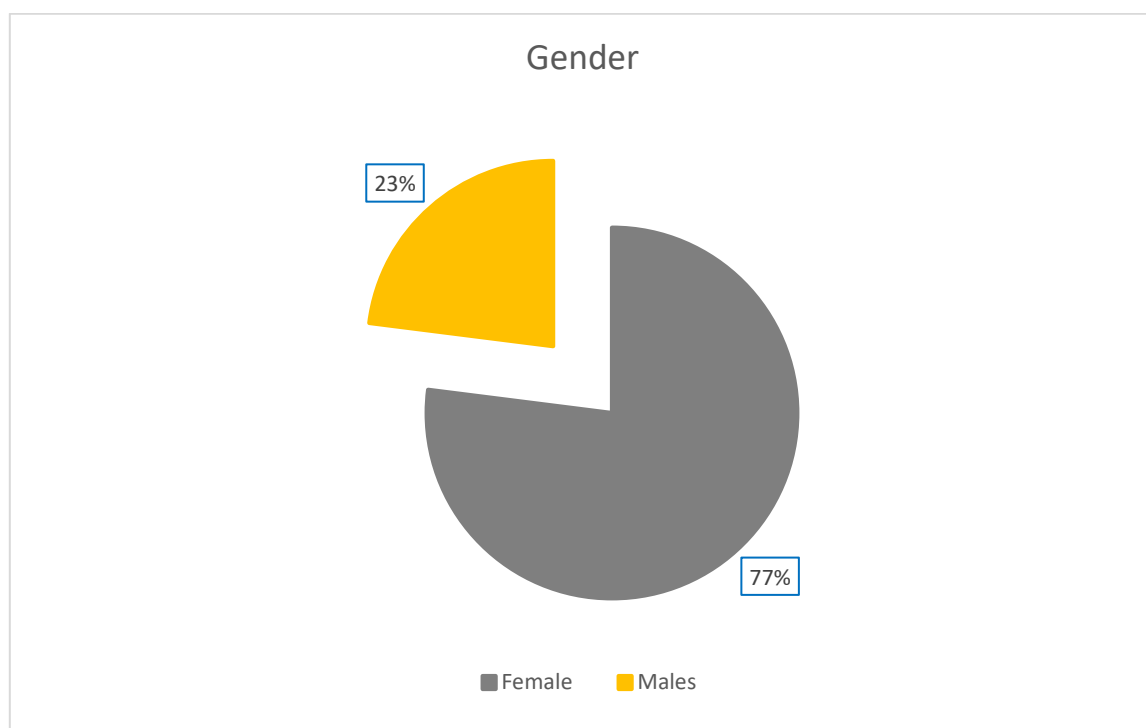


Figure 5.1 Gender of receptionists

Regarding the nationality of the receptionists, two nationalities emerged. Ghanaians dominated (95%) the respondents and a minority (5%) were migrants. Once again, managers gave various explanations on why the more significant majority of receptionists in this study were Ghanaians (see Figure 5.2 and Appendix F1). A few of the managers explained that they do not have a deliberate policy to employ only Ghanaians and they would love to employ people from different countries (which they have done in the past) because of language differences. Still, it is just a coincidence that all their receptionists are from Ghana. One of the managers mentioned;

“It just happened, we do not stick to nationalities. One major core values of the XXX (hotel name) brand is to celebrate nationalities” (P30 FOM).

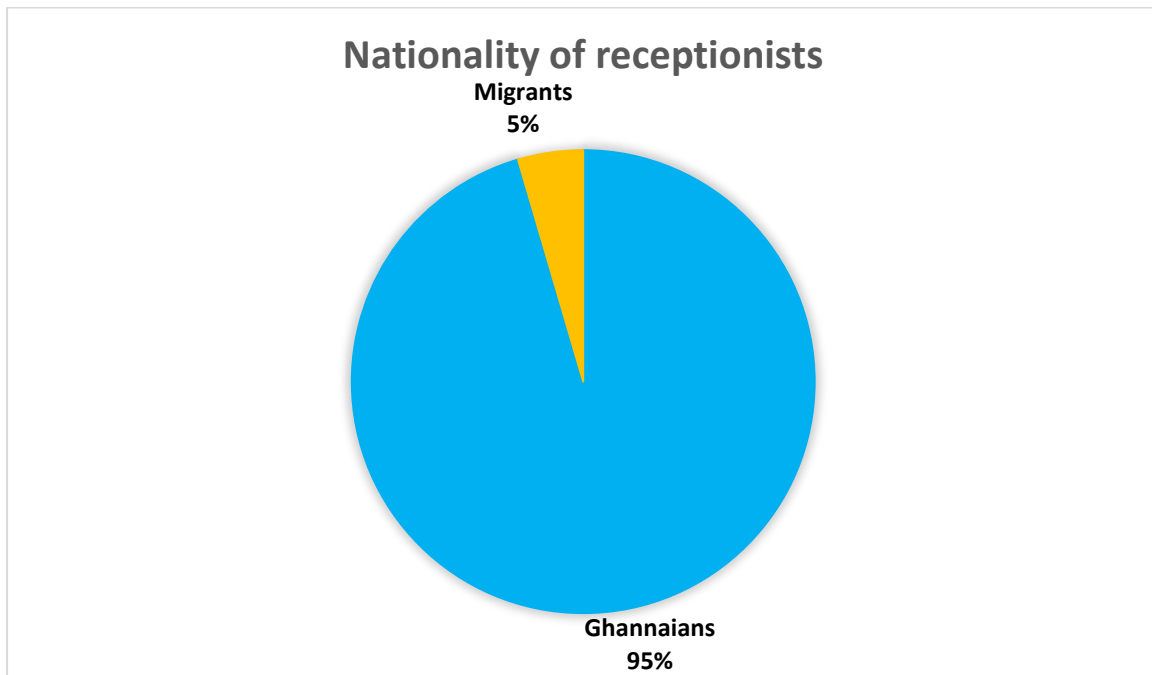


Figure 5.2 Nationality of receptionists

However, a number of the hotels had policies contrary to the above sentiment which meant that a large majority of managers of domestic branded hotels were obliged to employ only Ghanaians as receptionists because they managed a local branded hotel. Others said they employ locals because they consider the high graduate unemployment situation in Ghana. These were expressed in the statements below:

“They are all Ghanaians; we don’t employ foreigners at the reception. This is a Ghanaian hotel, and Ghanaians are capable of handling it and Ghanaians will have to work” (P22 GM).

“...we try to give priority to Ghanaians. I mean there is a lot of Ghanaians who need jobs; so we find the right one. And most of them are here working for quite a long time, I mean some of the staff, the minimum I think is four years. Some have been working for 15 years” (P13 GM).

Another reason a few-managers gave for the employment of domestic receptionists was the high cost of hiring an expatriate receptionist, as one of them said;

“Migrant receptionists demand higher salaries/wages” (P20 FOM).

Importantly, this means that migrant receptionist will receive higher pay than a local receptionist of the same rank. One manager said when their hotel used to be internationally owned and branded, they would get receptionists from Francophone countries, but when it changed to locally branded and owned, all receptionists are now from Ghana.

The receptionists in this study were mostly young people aged between 18 and 35 years, and some of them were studying part-time for professional careers. But many have chosen reception as a career because they said they love people. Predominantly the receptionists were highly qualified academically and had attained a tertiary level of education. The majority of the receptionists had a bachelor's degree in varying areas of specialisation including; Hospitality Management, Tourism, Accounting, Psychology, English, French, Human Resource Management, Marketing (see Table 5.1 Educational qualifications of Receptionists Figure 5.3 and Appendix F1). The managers in this study were of the view that there is a need to hire well educated and qualified receptionists. Some of them said;

"...academic qualification, definitely they have finished their college education, which helps because it is easy for them to understand the training that we are giving them" (P13 GM).

"Educational qualifications... one of the criteria we to look at because the people they're going to meet are of high class, businessmen and others. You can't get somebody there who cannot express him or herself to somebody like, the wife of Bill Gates who came to sleep here, Obama was here, Hillary Clinton was here... (P17 GM).

Table 5.1 Educational qualifications of Receptionists

Educational qualification	Number of Participants
Bachelor degree	14 (63%)
Diploma	6 (27%)
Professional Certificate	1 (5%)
Ordinary level certificate	1 (5%)
Total	22 (100)

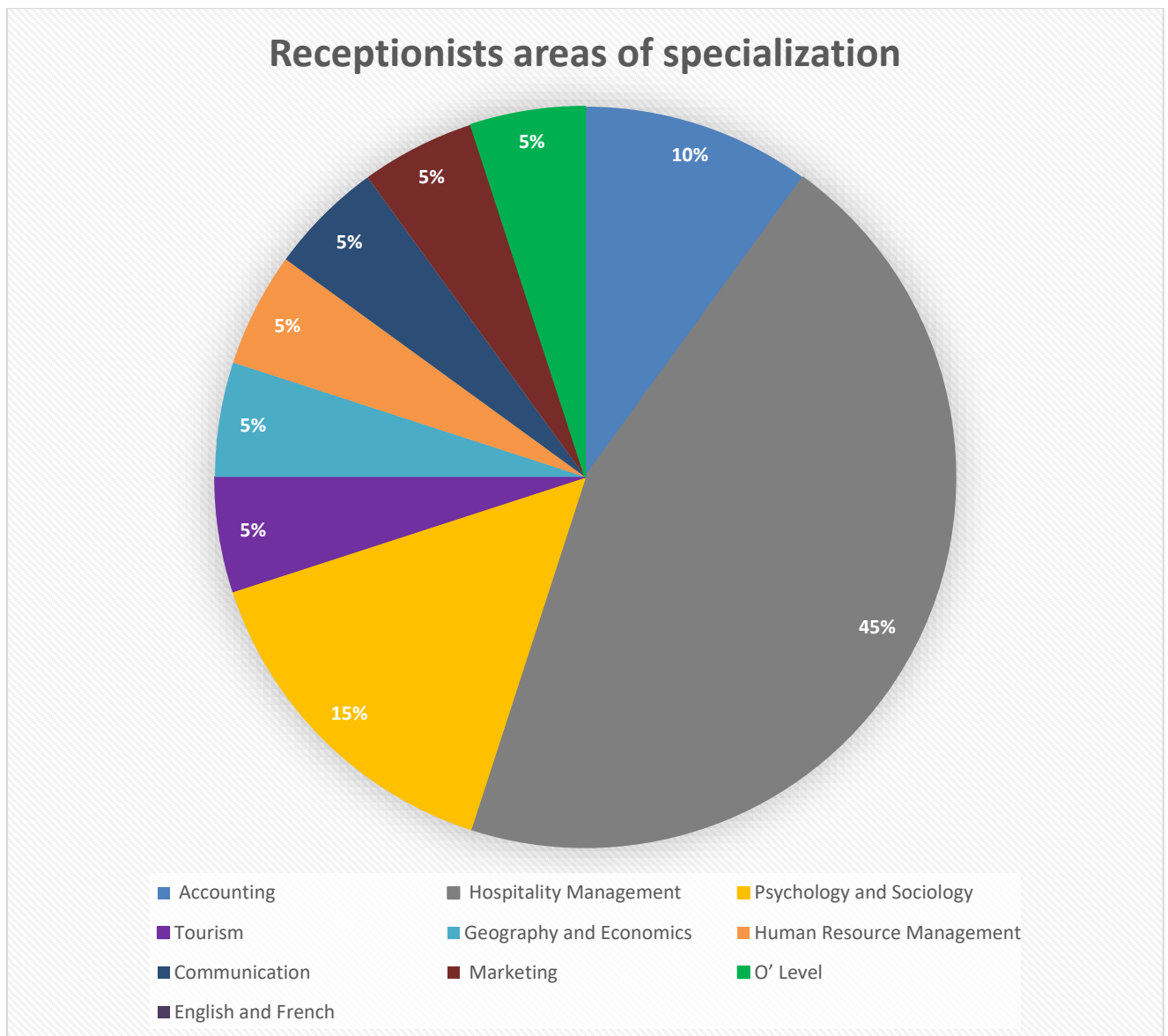


Figure 5.3 Receptionists area of specialisation

On average, the receptionists had worked in the hotels for seven years, with the years of experience ranging between 1 year and 15 years. All the receptionists were full-time employees who worked 8 or 9 hours per shift either morning, afternoon, or night, as the front desks operated 24 hours daily. The managers were asked whether they considered work experience when hiring receptionists for their hotels. The consensus was that they were not too bothered as to whether an employee had work experience because even if they have not had prior experience, they would be given the necessary training to enable them to function the way the managers wanted. A significant majority of FOMs, GMs stated that they consider prior experience before hiring. These are captured in their sentiments expressed below:

"There are some people who might not have the experience, but when you look at the person you can say that this person can be trained... you can get the person ... and then train the person" ... (P17 GM).

"Ideally, we prefer somebody who has experience. I guess any kind of customer relation experience is good but specifically if you have worked in a hotel before that is a big plus because then you understand our industry and what is needed... (P14 FOM).

However, there was some disagreement between the receptionists regarding training. Whereas a significant majority of the receptionist agreed to the relevance of training, a minority of the receptionists did not agree to that but said having the passion for the job of a receptionist is more important than training. Those receptionists who viewed training as important said it is because they believe their work requires technical as well as role-appropriate skills. Training also helps them to be able to carry out the front office operations efficiently and also to develop personal qualities (which are necessary for the job), as some of them stated:

"Training is important because it gives a good perspective on the job to an employee, for example, it helped me to learn the technical aspect of the job such as check-in and check-out, registration, etc.," (P19 R).

"Very appropriate, for example, communication and negotiation skill; I was not a confident person, but through the training, I became confident and can talk to guests. Communication in hospitality is different to let's say the banks. Through the training, I learned to communicate effectively" (P19 R).

One receptionist who believes that having a passion for the job of a receptionist is more important than training said:

"What I believe in is this job is more of 'you need to be born for it'. You need to have passion for it. You can go for training, but you can come back and do something else because it is not as easy as the training is. When you come to the field, it is different. So, you need to have the love for it" (P25 R).

Close to half of the receptionists reported that they were directly employed as receptionists in their current hotels, while the other half were initially employed in other departments before being transferred to the front desk team. These respondents (the transferred) said it helped them to know how the other departments of the hotel functioned and gave them an understanding of how the other departments co-ordinate with the front office to deliver experiences. One of them worded it this way:

"I ... came in as a receptionist, but for a few months I went to night audit, ... came back to the reception and I also went to reservation ... but at a point, we were short of staff, ... and then I do both reservation and reception at the same time. And now I am doing a group desk that is handling residential conferences, but just for a week ... (P24).

"I worked as a porter. I worked first of all with the maintenance section of the organisation as a casual employee, with the mechanical section. And

then I came to the front desk to assist as a supporter for six years, and then I rose through the ranks to work as a business centre agent, and then I came to the reception as a front office person (P18).

The receptionists had a range of background characteristics such as gender, years of work experience, academic qualifications, and nationality. Their background characteristics indicate they are in a position to create memorable guest experiences for the guests they encounter at the reception. The reason is most of them had had tertiary education and therefore, had encountered people from different backgrounds, even had the opportunity to interact or work with some of such individuals in groups for school group projects. Such receptionists would have had prior hands-on knowledge of variations in cultures and the need to reach a common understanding to be able to interact with people from different cultural backgrounds. In addition to being trained, the receptionists were a mix of individuals with the requisite skills to serve the guest and produce memorable guest experiences.

5.2.2 Profile of Managers

In total, 16 managers participated in the interviews, including; 10 Front Office Managers (FOM), and six General Managers. Further information about how these managers were recruited is presented in the methodology chapter (see Chapter Four, section 4.3.3).

Similar to the gender bias of the receptionists in this study, the majority (90%) of the FOMs were females. All Front Office Managers were Ghanaians, and a significant majority of them were bilingual, speaking English and French. The FOMs indicated that they had worked in several roles in the front office, including Switchboard operators, Reservation agents, Receptionists, Reception supervisors, Guest Relations Officers, Assistant Front Office Managers before assuming their current roles. All the FOMs were full-time employees who had worked between 1 to 15 years. However, all the General Managers were males in both the local and international hotels. One interesting revelation was that all the general managers in both the local and international hotels were migrants except one local hotel whose GM was a Ghanaian.

The manager's background portrays an array of experience which they bring on board in the various hotels used in this study. The FOMs having worked in various roles within the industry which is an advantage when the reception is busy or there is a staff shortage in a department. With such experience, they could be an important resource for the receptionists in terms of supervision, training, and support. The migrant general managers and their local FOMs are capable of devising strategies to blend the international and the local cultures in terms of the servicescapes design, recruiting, and training staff for the expected guest interactions, which can help to create the kind of experiences guests desire.

5.3 The hotel receptionist and reception experiences

The receptionist's role is critical to the reception experience because they co-create the service experience with the guests. This section is in three parts. The first part reports why the receptionist chose their career paths. The second part presents the respondents' perspectives on how hotel guests are received and their reception experience. This reception experience includes the hospitality the guest receives and the ensuing human interactions within the servicescapes at the reception. The third part presents the receptionist perspectives of the guests' expectations, which reports how they categorise their guests and tailor their interactions to meet the kind of expectations they (the receptionist) believe the guests are seeking.

5.3.1 The reasons receptionists gave for choosing the reception career path

The receptionists gave various reasons for wanting to be receptionists, and some comments by managers and front office managers add insights. The section again reports what receptionists like about their job, and how they tailor their services to suit the guests.

The receptionists in this study gave several reasons why they chose their profession, including; enjoy interacting with new people (guests), serving and helping guests, the fun of human interactions, and doing a job for pay. According to half of the receptionists, interacting with guests enabled them to learn new and different things about other cultures, including new languages, and behaviours not known to them. Another quarter of the receptionists explained that they love meeting people and sharing interesting experiences, while the remaining quarter emphasised liking human relations. For example:

"I really like to be cosmopolitan; I want to learn about different cultures... A hotel is one place where different nations come and converge just for accommodation ... I thought it wise to come here so that I could learn languages..." (P 35 R).

"Contact with people, well you get to make friends, build some kind of relationship, both official and non-official. And then you learn from people. ... everyday I wake up and come to work because of the experience I am going to get, I don't know whether it's going to be good or bad, but it's rewarding for me" (P 5 R).

These explanations given by the receptionists were not surprising because they believe that the Ghanaians enjoy face-to-face interaction and value striking up acquaintances easily as seen in literature (refer to context Chapter Two, section 2.3).

Those receptionists who stated that they enjoy serving and helping people explained that they gained satisfaction from attending to guests' needs, serving and caring for them, and assisting them in solving problems, especially those related to accommodation. They said once the guest has solutions to their problems, the receptionists were satisfied and thought that their hotels might benefit because there is a likelihood of repeat business from the guest. Therefore, seeing the guest satisfied was rewarding to them. One of the respondents voiced this by saying:

"I love to serve people, and there are many jobs that help you to serve people but why hospitality?... So after doing my internship in one of the hotels, I loved the fact that people come and you give them services and the fact that they appreciate it makes me enjoy to do the job" ... (P21 R).

Those receptionists who mentioned that they enjoy human interactions explained that they are passionate or love their job as 'receptionist' as they have the opportunity to meet different people and interact with them. These receptionists believed that they possess traits and abilities such as friendliness and other social skills that make them able to relate to guests from diverse backgrounds and can tolerate their differences, which they believe are necessary for the job of a receptionist. One of them worded it this way:

"I like the experience, I like meeting new people, I like encountering new cultures, and then sometimes the friendships go beyond worker-client. Some guests who stay for long become friends even when they go out; we still exchange emails, ... there are quite some good tips at the hotel environment" (P6 R).

Another respondent's passion for human interaction was inspired by the programme of study in the university. This was voiced by saying:

"... because of my studies in psychology - it deals with human behaviour and understanding human behaviour. ... my interests in finding out how people think, how they react in certain circumstances, nationalities and the like, ... Because I deal with people, from all backgrounds with different cultures and ethnicities and diverse backgrounds. So, I think the front office is a good opportunity for what I studied or my interest" (P6 R).

A few of the receptionists mentioned that they chose the profession because they needed a job, and based on recommendations from friends, family, and colleagues, they got the opportunity to become receptionists. A minority of the receptionists mentioned that 'whom you know' (thus, referrals, and connections) is key to getting a job offer, especially where the rate of unemployment is high among university graduates. It is not surprising that some of the receptionists chose this profession based on referrals for a profession they did not plan to pursue or which they preferred (refer to Table 5.2 and Appendix F3).

Table 5.2 Reasons receptionists gave for choosing their career path

Questions/ main theme	Code	Keywords
Why did you become a receptionist?	Interest in interacting with guests	Interacting with guests, Contact with guest, Meeting guests/people, Meeting people from different cultures, sharing experiences, Human relations
	An interest in serving guests	Attending to peoples/guests' needs, Enjoy/love serving people/guest, Caring for people Meeting/attending to guest/people's needs Satisfying guest Helping people
	Love/like the job	Love the hotel job Like the job Enjoy it
	Personal traits	Friendliness Peoples person
	Programme of study in school	studies in psychology, studied hospitality management
	Cultural exchange	Learn from different cultures People's different behaviours Learn other languages
	recommendation by a family/friend/colleague	Recommended by family
	By chance	Job offer wanted to try something new it just happened just applied

In some hotels, the practice was to hire internally for the reception position. A General Manager expressed this by saying:

"We do not hire from outside like that; we will put the employment ad for staff who are interested. Someone from the kitchen or someone from the restaurant, or even from the laundry or housekeeping may be interested in working in front office we interview the person ... (P13 GM)".

However, there were a few of the receptionists who indicated that becoming a receptionist happened by chance. They just wanted to try something new by picking up the role of a receptionist and therefore had to learn on the job. One of them said:

"I used to admire people who worked in the hospitality industry even though I don't like meeting people. It kind of stresses me up. ... it wasn't something I planned, I saw an advert, and I just applied" (P38 R).

Drawing from the responses given by the receptionists, it could be deduced that there are three different categories of individuals within the respondents. First, the large majority who chose the receptionist profession because they were interested in it and willingly went in for it. With such a group of people, having this desire and attitude would be advantageous as a great majority of managers had already indicated that it is a requirement they look for before hiring and training an individual. This quality could be a plus in giving their best in terms of exhibiting the skill of creating memorable guest experiences. However, there could be instances where few individuals may not intend to choose a particular career path, but once they are given the opportunity, the desire to excel could be enough motivation to give of one's best. Therefore, if the relative few of those respondents who happened to become receptionist by family or friend's referral happened to fall into such a category then with training, they may do well by giving the guest the kind of reception experience they desire. Meanwhile, there are instances where a few individuals just want a job or are given jobs not because they are interested in it. Once their interests are not in such jobs, regardless of the training they have, they may not be able to give of their best.

Further, the Ghanaian traditions, norms and upbringing, formal education qualifications and years of experience may come to bear on the service delivery a receptionist may exhibit when it comes to guest interactions. Thus, the kind of quality of interactions a guest may receive could depend on the receptionist's experiences, interest, and qualification.

5.3.2 The Receptionist Approach to Creating Guest Experiences at the Reception

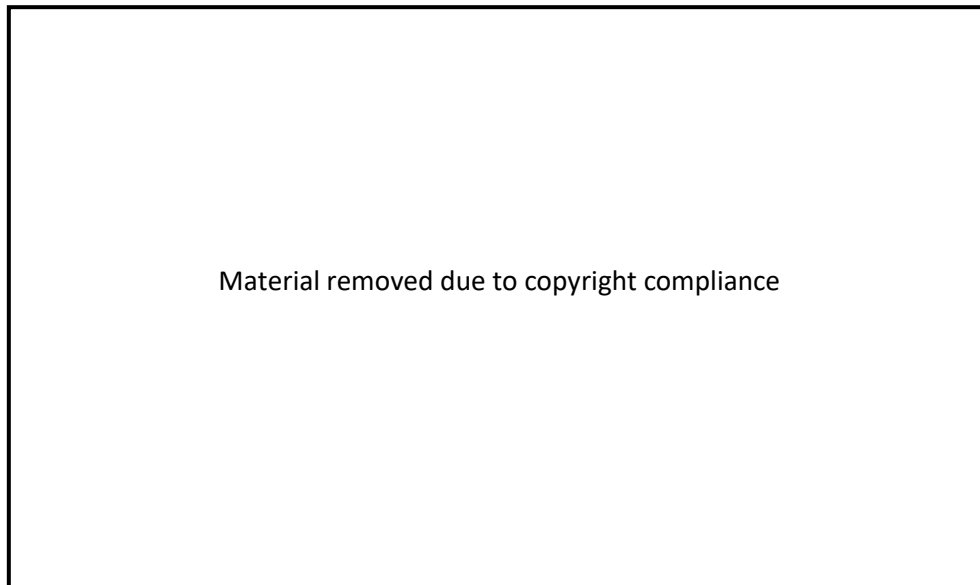
This part presents how the receptionists perceive how the hotel reception experience is co-created through human interaction within the reception servicescapes. It begins by presenting the various servicescapes within the Ghanaian context used for the study, and then continues with hospitality experiences the guest enjoys at the reception from the receptionist perspectives and, finally, the resultant guests expected experiences indicated by the receptionists.

5.2.2.1 Servicescapes in Reception Experiences

As discussed in Chapter Four, this study compares local and international branded hotels and their respective servicescapes have been presented in the sections below.

The International hotels used in Ghana were hotels which were owned by foreigners or managed by a franchise. The reception of these international hotels as exhibited by the various pictures below had themes which in the Ghanaian sense were foreign. However, such themes were important as they reflect the international hotel chain or franchise (such as Accor, or Inter-Continental Hotels Group (see

Figure 5.4), to align with the worldwide standards for each brand (see Chapter Seven, section 7.3 for further details).



Source: <https://hotelspaceonline.com/projects/kempinski-hotel-gold-coast-city-accra-ghana/>
<https://www.movenpick.com/en/africa/ghana/accra/moevenpick-ambassador-hotel-accra/overview/>

Researcher's photo with permission

The domestic branded hotels were locally owned and managed, and their front office was designed as per the owners' choice and what they deemed suitable as explained by the large majority of managers and the receptionists. A noticeable commonality with all the local branded hotels was that their front office were distinctively designed with Ghanaian themes of storytelling artefacts, signs and symbols (see Figure 5.5 below). All the managers explained that the rationale behind the choice of the design was to promote local culture and hospitality.

Material removed due to copyright compliance

Figure 5.5 Local branded front office servicescapes

Source: <https://www.theafricanregenthotel.com/>
https://www.tripadvisor.com/LocationPhotoDirectLink-g293797-d1079301-i168337310-The_African_Regent_Hotel-Accra_Greater_Accra.html

In addition to the views of the managers, one of the receptionists said:

“guest must be given a connection between the local culture and the destination at the reception” (P10 R).

More than half of the receptionists in this study explained that their servicescapes were deliberate as they wanted their guest to have a distinctive Ghanaian, and African, experience (see Figure 5.6) on arrival. They said:

“Most hotels do not have the African touch, like ours, the African touch alone draws a lot of people to us. Because most of our guests are foreigners, and they value artwork, so that alone brings them closer to us most of the time” (P15 R).

“xxx (name of the hotel) is an ‘Afropolitan’ hotel. Afropolitan means infusing the African theme with the European hospitality or the European theme. ... once you even think of xxx (name of the hotel), you will expect some African things to be here. So once you get here you realise you are in Africa - the hotel depicts Africa” (P 10 R).

“... where I am right now, the ambience is such that it’s calm, it has an African touch, and it has a soothing experience. ... So, it plays a very important role with even how the guests react (P37 R).



Figure 5.6 Local branded front office servicescapes

Source: Researcher's photo with permission

A large number of Front Office Managers and General Managers of these domestic hotels supported the views of the receptionists. They reiterated the importance of the local servicescapes and the kind of atmosphere they aimed at creating. One of them captured their views by saying:

"[The servicescapes] plays a lot of roles; like making the person feel relaxed with the music, for instance. The natural flowers also give a comfortable feeling, and the open space makes the person feel not monitored and free to move around. The Ghanaian symbols also welcome a lot of foreigners. Because they are inquisitive and would ask, 'What symbols are these, and what are they standing for?' It even involves us in a chat about it, giving the opportunity to talk to them more about Ghana (P34 FOM).

A minority of the receptionists added that the design of the front office is just to impress all their guests. They noticed that well-travelled and first time or intermittent travellers and locals get so overwhelmed when they get to their reception because of the setup of the servicescapes. To express their appreciation for what they see, it is not unusual for guests to first ask if they could take photos. Some receptionists said:

"Foreigners enjoy the design of the front office, the artefacts, and the uniform of staff. They even take photos. Same with Ghanaians, they appreciate and compliment it"(P10).

"In terms of travel experience, those who have travelled much make comparisons to where they have been before because they have been to many places, but ours might be different to them, so they appreciate how

the front desk is designed with an African theme. New travellers seemed surprised at the African theme and take pictures of the front office.” (P10).

“Travellers, even those who travel on business, expect and appreciate the taste of local flavour” (P19 R).

A large number of the managers and the receptionists in this study had a general belief that the use of local designs and artefacts are deliberate in creating a memorable and intriguing first-time experience for both their international and domestic guests. They further mentioned that because of that, they continuously make changes in the theme and design and this view was shared by a few of managers who emphasised the need to redesign the reception periodically in statements like;

“We need to continue changing the design of the reception because what we have today might not enhance the ambience in the near future” (P30 FOM)” and “...within two years ... the front was changed totally to make up for the re-brand standard” (P17 GM).

However, some of these internationally branded hotels still had certain Ghanaian artefacts, signs and symbols in their servicescapes to complement their reception design. Some of the identified symbols included names written in local Ghanaian languages with their English (literal) interpretations by their side (see Figure 5.7 below).



Figure 5.7 Front desk of an international branded hotel with a touch of local design

Source: Researcher’s photo with permission

A few receptionists indicated several instances where some guests disagree with some of the English translations given to some of the symbols. And sometimes have even resulted in heated but interesting arguments in some cases, For example, the ‘Gye Nyame’ symbol (see Figure 5.8). One receptionist captured this by saying that:

The beautiful African artefacts and symbols intrigue the guest. The only complaints we have been getting from guests from English speaking (Anglophone) countries such as British, American, some Africans is about the inscription of the interpretation of the “Gye Nyame” Symbol. The symbol is literary translated as “except God.” They say it is not acceptable. According to them, there are symbols of friendship, peace, joy and “except God,” which they interpret to be “everything is good except God.” They say it should rather be “accept God” (P27 R).

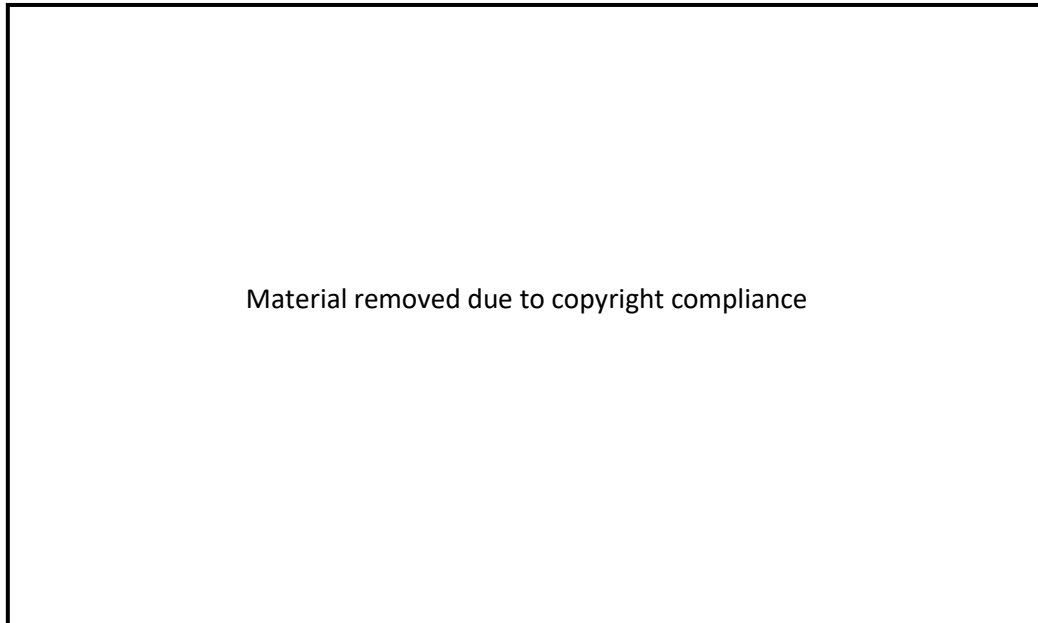


Figure 5.8 Local symbols used for front office design

Source: <http://misbeeee.blogspot.com/2015/09/whats-your-favourite-adinkra-symbol.html>

A significant majority of managers explained the essence of maintaining international identity with a Ghanaian touch. The managers of the international hotels were of the view that they had to maintain their international uniqueness regardless of which part of the globe they find their hotel. But, then they have been given minute flexibility to incorporate the local traditions into their standards. For example, the General Manager of an international hotel said:

If you look at the symbols on the wall, it has more Ghanaian culture introduced. It's a hotel in Ghana, so if a foreigner comes here, they will ask questions. What are these? And we will say these are symbols of Ghana (P13 GM).

The managers further explained that servicescapes are very important as they have some loyal guests who will not stay in any hotel other than a particular brand. Such guests expect to see the same or

similar servicescapes of their chosen hotel regardless of where they are. A greater majority of first-time guests do ask questions about the signs and symbols they see at the receptions as they are new to them, and according to the managers, they use the opportunity to educate such guests about the Ghanaian traditions and totems.

One other noticeable exhibit of the international hotels used in this study is the dress codes of the receptionists. The uniforms of the international hotel's receptionists were designed to reflect the brand's international culture worldwide. According to some of the receptionists, their uniforms (see Figure 5.9 below for examples) portray brand identity for their regular guests.

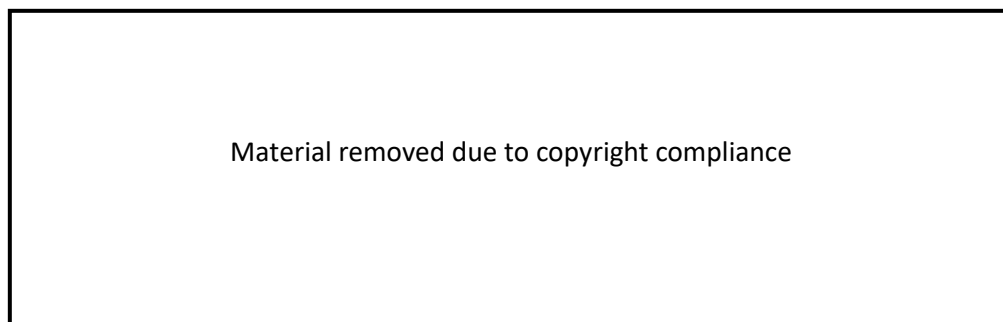


Figure 5.9 Dress code for international branded hotels

Source: <https://www.kempinski.com/en/accra/hotel-gold-coast-city/image-gallery/>

The view of the receptionist was echoed by a General Manager who reiterated that they have an identity to maintain and so they cannot go entirely Ghanaian, or African for that matter. The manager expressed it as:

"...Because we have international guests; if you see the dress, it's not very African, it's more international. We've got a blue suit, with scarf or tie, and I think eventually going forward, we will change everything to a Ghanaian theme which we are working on. I think by the end of the year, or early next year or first quarter of next year, you can see that everybody is wearing Ghanaian custom-designed material. We want to because ... we wanted to be real Ghanaian to give people the Ghanaian touch" (P13 GM).

It must be noted that in the managers' opinion, some of the international hotels had some Ghanaian traditional fabric designs in their international uniforms to give it a blend. In contrast, others had days (mostly Fridays) where workers must portray the Ghanaian traditional dress code nationwide, so they also have designed local fabrics with their hotel logos (see Figure 5.10 and Figure 5.11 below) in them.

They have sewn unique styles they use on such days and weekends. In some of the study hotels, management had formulated this into their dress code policies.



Figure 5.10 Hotel staff in their traditional Friday wear

Source: <https://www.imgkoa.com/zh-hans/profile/accracityhotel/>

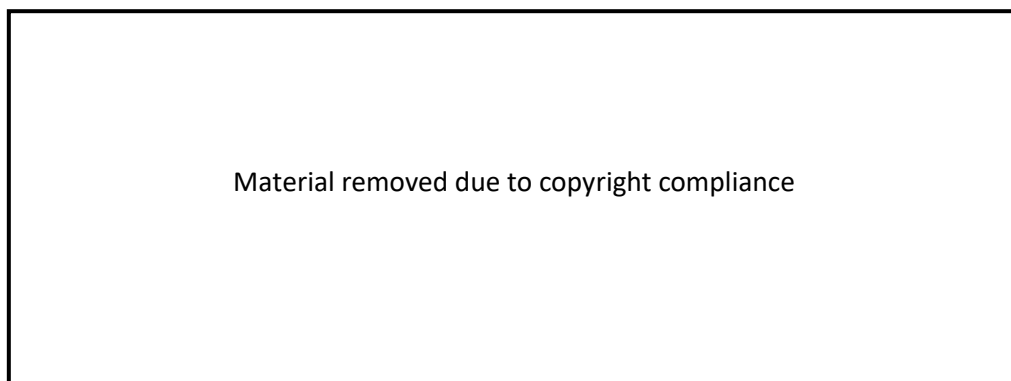


Figure 5.11 Hotel staff in their local dress code customised with their hotel's official colours and logo

Source: <https://coconutgrovehotelsghana.com/regencyhotel/>
<https://kumasi-city.goldentulip.com/en-us/>

As mentioned earlier, a few international hotels in this study had incorporated local fabrics and designs into their international uniforms, to portray a blend of the international brand standard and local culture. (See Figure 5.12 below).



Figure 5.12 Hotel staff in their international dress code incorporating local fabric and design

Source: <https://www.kempinski.com/en/accra/hotel-gold-coast-city/image-gallery/>
[//twitter.com/kempinskiacc/status/1174755824369119232](https://twitter.com/kempinskiacc/status/1174755824369119232)

Dress codes were something that both the managers and receptionists were particular about when it comes to guests' reception experience. However, unlike their international counterparts, the locally-branded hotels wore only African or Ghanaian branded clothes (sewn into uniforms) solely made from Ghanaian fabrics (See Figure 5.10).

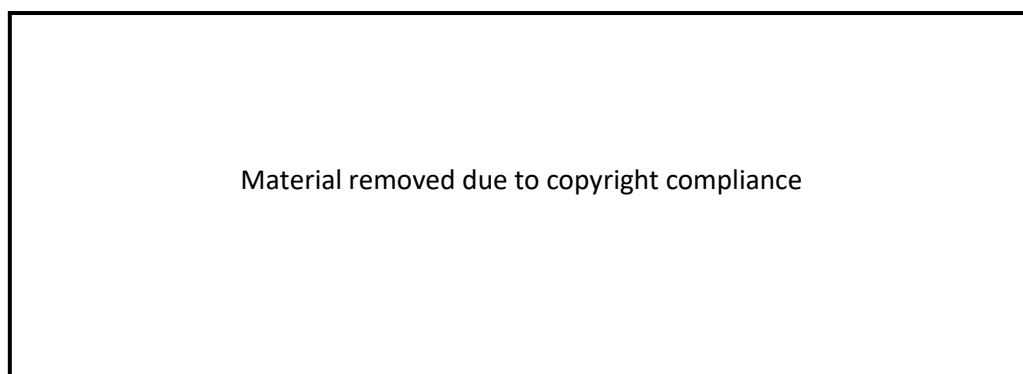


Figure 5.13 Reception dress code for domestic hotels

Source: <https://www.legacyhotels.co.za/hotels/labadi-beach-hotel>

The receptionists reported that their uniforms were made explicitly from famous local branded fabrics called 'Woodin' (see Figure 5.14 below) and other fabrics made from companies like GTP (Ghana

Textile Products), ATL (Akosombo Textile Limited), and Printex. The textile companies are all Ghanaian based institutions. Receptionists match their clothes with locally made accessories.

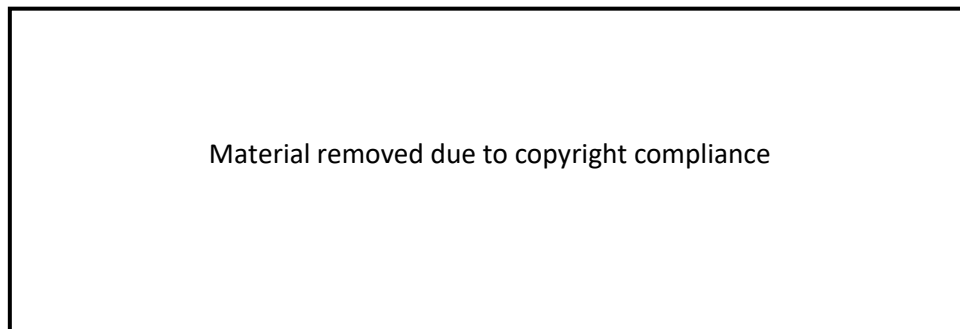


Figure 5.14 Fabrics for front office dress code for domestic hotels

<https://www.theafricanregenthotel.com>

The managers and receptionists were of the view the receptionists' appearance, and the servicescapes in the hospitality industry, are an essential part of the cultural experiences desired by the guests. They pay particular attention to them. According to the managers, they use typical Ghanaian fabrics and symbols in the servicescapes to portray African tradition and more specifically, Ghanaian culture (see Figure 5.15). One of them stated that;

"The ambience is part of the whole setup to make it look or have the African feel that is why they wear African fabric. ..., everybody else wears the African fabric ... we do try to portray African design ... you realise we all are wearing the African type of uniform or let's say the 'woodin fabric' all around the hotel ..." (P22 GM).

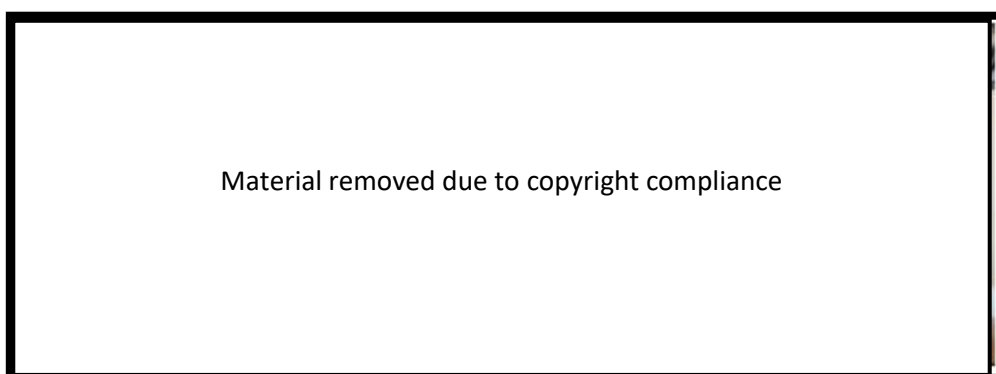


Figure 5.15 Local front desk dress code

<https://www.theafricanregenthotel.com>

Commenting on the need to be particular about the dress codes, both the receptionists and the managers were of the view that the choice of style and colour is particularly important. They explained that a uniform and well-groomed individual displays confidence, identity, smartness and professionalism. As a result, according to the greater majority of the managers, when hiring receptionists, they look for people with good appearance, and believe the dress code complements the physical appearance of the receptionist. One of the managers stated that;

"We look for people with good appearance, good communication skills, a team player and a people's person. These are the first things I look at, and after that, we will continue with training" (P30 FOM).

A large number of the receptionists added to the beliefs of their managers by stating that having a blend of uniforms is a form of psychological make-up for them as it gives a good image about the hotel itself, and also showcases local designs for local businesses. A receptionist expressed the above view in saying:

"My uniform is important to my job because it has the African touch, and it portrays the image of the hotel" (P15).

It must be noted that the servicescapes of the hotel were key to the kind of atmosphere both the international and domestic hotels aimed at portraying. From the views of the majority of managers and receptionists, the key elements of the servicescapes include themes, artefacts, temperature, signs, symbols, music, and dress code of receptionists. There were some marked distinctions in some aspects of the designs, whereas some aspects were relatively the same.

Apart from the above, there were other elements within the servicescapes of the international hotels such as music, lighting levels, the blend of colour shades and temperature which the managers and the receptionists believed enhance reception experiences for their guests. In the reception of international hotels, one will hear international music playing at a particular minimal volume but still audible. One of the managers indicated that they deliberately create a specific atmosphere within the reception for their guests to feel at home and stated that it is their brand policy worldwide. He said:

"We always try to create the atmosphere where ...you feel at home, that music being played here it is played in Australia. They play the same type of music all over the world...." (P17 GM)

One other distinction between the locally-branded hotels and the international ones was the choice and selection of music. Unlike the international hotels, the managers of the locally branded hotels specifically mentioned that they only play local music at the reception, and they even organise local

live bands for their guests at certain times. They explained that it is done deliberately so their guests can have a feel of the local music. One general manager of a locally branded hotel said:

“The music style - we have African ... we have a singing band (local music performers), they come and sing ...” (P11 GM).

The findings show some marked commonalities and prominent differences between the intentions and focus of the hotels used in this study. Whereas the international hotels sought to maintain and promote their brand and the global or multi-national culture of their hotels worldwide, the locally-branded hotels aim at showcasing the local traditions and culture. It was evident that international hotels have adopted the practice of blending their global cultural values with the local Ghanaian's. In contrast, the local branded hotels were purely Ghanaian (African) in both their servicescapes, dress codes and music selections. However, one key commonality among the hotels regarding the different servicescapes (that is, the front desk design, dress codes, music choices) was the intent behind it. They all aim at creating immediate memorable guests' experiences within their respective servicescapes that would be deemed specific to their hotels for repeat business (discussed in detail in Chapter Seven).

5.2.2.2 Local hospitality experience

A greater majority of the receptionists were of the view that they helped in co-creating hospitable experiences for the guests. They reported that first impressions are critical, and establish a relationship, or prevent any being formed. These first impressions are seen as key by them, and so they try to give their guests a lasting impression at reception. The findings highlight the fact that there were varied approaches used in welcoming a guest who arrives at the reception. A greater majority of the receptionists mentioned that their Ghanaian upbringing plays a critical role in the way they receive guests. For example, as they first smile, they also use their local language to greet guests (see Figure 5.16). One of the receptionists stated that;

“We use the word ‘Akwaaba’ which is literally translated as ‘welcome’. Some people sometimes ask for the meaning, others, especially the frequent guests, understand it” (P10 R).

According to the receptionists, the word ‘Akwaaba’ resonates well with all the guests that had ever travelled to Ghana before (see Chapter Two section 2.3 for further discussions). To warmly interact with the guests, receptionists address guests by their names and titles if known (as noted, addressing people by their titles is important to Ghanaian people and forms part of the advice for visitors). In the view of many respondents, this formal greeting is a sign of respect, and they take first impressions

seriously. This study found that receptionists are proud of these initial greetings, and they believe they also make the guests happy.

A receptionist explained that:

“Well, they always say that Ghanaians are very hospitable, that is the international guest. Even the other African countries say Ghanaians are hospitable. When they come and see the smiles, they are not surprised” (P15 R).

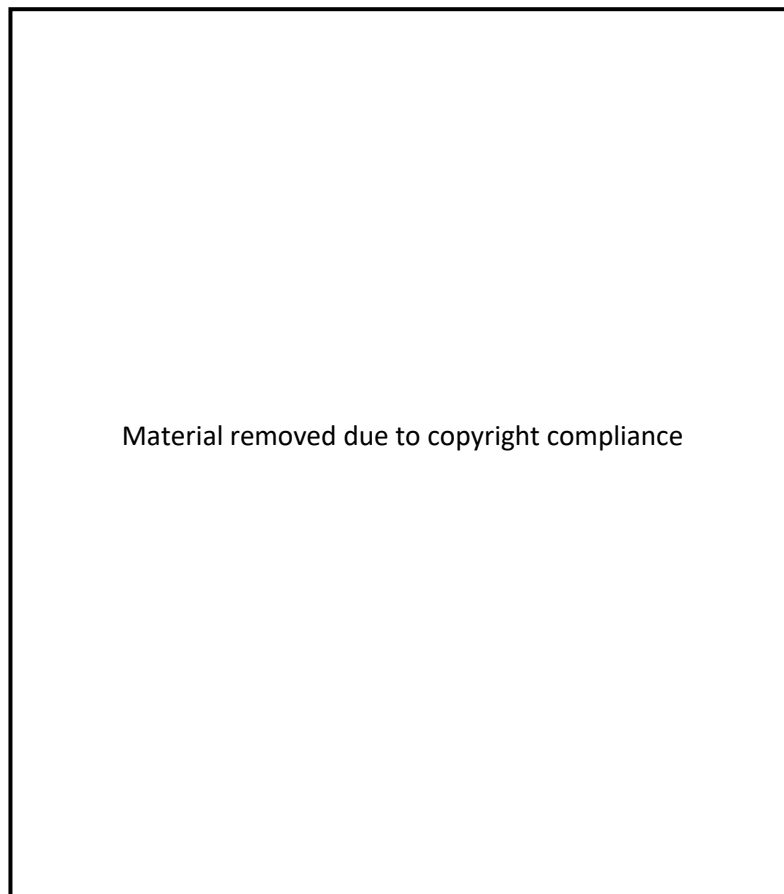


Figure 5.16 A receptionist welcoming guests with a scarf with the inscription of ‘akwaaba’ translated ‘welcome.

Source: <https://www.kempinski.com/en/accra/hotel-gold-coast-city/image-gallery/>)

The respondents said this first initial greeting, complimentary drink or gifts of the kind and manner they present it to their guests, is specifically Ghanaian. It cannot be found anywhere else and something they are proud of, and they believe the guests are also happy with it.

As stated earlier (refer to Section 5.2.2.2 above) the welcome given to guests at the various receptions of the hotels in this study were similar, with the same intention regardless of whether the hotel is local or international.

5.2.2.3 Human interaction and guest experiences in the reception

Human interactions are critical at the reception to the co-creation of the reception service experiences. The majority of the receptionists were of the view that the most important element of the reception experience is the 'human face' to the experience, which is shaped by the Ghanaian way of living and doing things. The receptionists reported that they exhibited friendliness in welcoming guests. Some of the receptionists acknowledged how tired and frustrated guests might be due to long flights, and therefore, the guests needed to receive a warm welcome to make them feel relaxed.

"A smile from a receptionist. That is the most important thing because most people might have been frustrated looking at the kind of airport we have everything is so clumsy and scanty. They get so stressed out from their way even to the hotel, so if they come, they expect to see a nice smiling person ready to assist them. That alone gives them some peace of mind and some calmness" (P15 R).

All the General Managers agreed with the importance of the 'human touch' to the reception experience as two of them explained in the quotes below:

"It's not about the room [laughs], the room counts [laughs] but it is about the people that he/she encounters. That is what happens here. Our staff are the greatest of our assets.... "(P13 GM).

"That's the human touch...guests journey will not be complete if they don't have that human touch, at any section or area that the guest enters and wants something done; they must feel that welcoming spirit. So this is the thing that they value most – "because of your staff, I am coming back..." (P17 GM).

A more significant number of FOM backed such a view expressed by receptionists and general managers in this study as one of them said:

"I believe leadership is to serve so, I sometimes check-in guest, do airport drop off, I carry luggage 'and do all the other duties of the front office staff. (P30, FOM).

According to the FOMs performing reception duties is seen as a 'valued service' from the guests' perspectives (see Chapter Six). A key element which was mentioned by the receptionists as important to the human interactions was communication, which was deemed as key in creating guest reception

experiences. In the receptionists' view, communication in all manner and forms such as eye contact, tone of voice, clarity in speech and speaking in a language that both the receptionists and the guest could understand, were deemed necessary and important in guest experiences at the reception. The receptionists believed that if communication goes wrong from the start, for instance, right from taking booking to check-in, it has the potential to mar the guest reception experience. The necessity and importance of communication at the reception was captured in the statements below:

"Communication is the foundation; all forms of communication, body language, eye contact, and gestures. When we miss communication, the guest experience is marred" (P19 R).

"You don't have to assume anything, and you need to communicate with the person you are dealing with. Various guests come here, and you will get in touch with a lot of customers with different characters. So, if you don't communicate well with them, you will have issues with them" (P26 R).

A greater majority of the receptionists mentioned that they were aware of, and were particularly sensitive to, the cross-cultural differences between them and their guests. They continued that when communicating with guests, they take note of certain communication cues as they might mean different things to different people. One typical example they gave was interpretations given to gestures and some body language. The receptionists were of the view that they must understand the guests to serve them as expected or desired. Communication differences result in frustrations for themselves and guests, leading to dissatisfaction. Two of the respondents described this by saying:

"When communicating with the guest, cultural differences should be considered; example, gestures, a wink means different things to different people, and some guests become offended by it. If I do not understand the guest, I cannot give him/her the service. ..." (P19 R).

"... communication with the guests, how you present yourself, ... how you explain things, sometimes they don't understand because they come from a different background, a different culture, but how you take your time to elaborate things for them, all form part of customer care" (P6 R).

As part of their hospitality, the receptionists make every effort to communicate with their guests. The receptionists further explained that because they were aware of the differences in cross-cultural communications, they made every effort to communicate and interact with guests in a friendly manner, especially those guests who do not speak English. They explained that they go out of their way even to use 'Google translator' to translate words from their guests' languages so that they can communicate effectively.

All the managers reiterated these sentiments expressed by the receptionists by saying that they encourage their receptionists to learn other international languages for ease of communication. The managers indicated that they were all themselves bi-lingual, and even organise French and other language lessons for their receptionists. The reason is the managers, and the receptionists believe, that once clear and understandable communications ensue between the guests and them, it enhances the reception experience. This view was expressed by one of the receptionists as:

“... and you are the first person they are having a real conversation with. It goes a long way to affect how they view the country, how they see the people and the impression that they take back home...” (P6 R).

The findings in this section revealed that the receptionists and their managers desired to create memorable guests' experiences by showing hospitality to all the guests at the reception. The attempts made by the receptionists indicate how they valued clear and understandable communication with their guests. For the receptionists to go to the extent of using various technological hardware and software to get a 'common' understanding with their guests was a novel idea and displayed initiative on the part of the receptionists in this study, to help co-create the guests' experience.

They were able to do this probably because, as indicated by their profile, most of them had had tertiary education. In Ghana recently as part of tertiary education, students are expected to submit assignments online, communicate with their lecturers online, even register their semester courses online, and do research for their course online. Students use technology in almost every aspect of their educational experiences. Therefore, for the receptionist to be able to go to this extent is not surprising as they had had previous encounters during their schooling. It is from this basis that they could probably have the idea to use technology to get a common understanding when they encounter unfamiliar languages and cultures, enabling them to provide the kind of experience their guests are looking for. This is the main foundation for the creation of lasting experiences for guests, and return of business for the organisation.

The findings also indicate that more than half of the receptionists were of the view that, during check-ins, the guests expect prompt and pleasant service that will meet their needs. In the opinion of the receptionists, the underlying reason is that once guests are met with pleasantness, they in return give back the same which could create good interaction and the desired guest experiences.

5.3.3 The Receptionists' account of Guest Expectations

By experience, the receptionists mentioned that they were able to group their guests into various categories and were able to tailor their interactions and the resultant experiences they believe each of the groups seeks. They mentioned five main categories of guest and what they believe is the expectation of each. These categories include; gender, purpose of travel, travel experience, age and nationality. The receptionists explained that the kind of guests determines the kind of interactions required and their demands at the receptionist desk.

One of the groups the receptionist spoke about was the gender of guests and how expectations differ between genders. All receptionists mentioned differences between male and female guests. A large majority of receptionists believed that the male guests were more interested in receiving reception services from a female receptionist than a male receptionist. For instance, two female receptionists said:

"... I find myself talking with more male guests than females" (P4). "As the saying goes like poles repel. Males enjoy interacting with female receptionists, and the female receptionists are approached by the male guests at the front desk" (P3 R).

A significant minority of the receptionists believed that female guests are more demanding than male guests. According to them, female guests request services and facilities, including some add-ons such as hair driers, shower caps, and shower gels even during check-ins, which are already in the rooms. A receptionist shared this experience when serving guests:

"Women tend to be impatient, and they need to be treated with care because women are expressive, and they can spread words about their bad experiences to others. When I am at the reception, and a man and a woman arrive at the same time, I will attend to the man first and spend the rest of the time on the woman" (19R).

Regarding the purpose of travel, the respondents had two categories of guests, namely; the business and frequent guests, and leisure or touring guests. The receptionists believed that the expectations and satisfaction of the guests differ between leisure and business guests. The receptionists were of the view that with the business guests, most expect quick and fast check-ins, access to internet connectivity whilst checking in, and most request rooms in quiet locations. Again they want less interaction, but want to enjoy excellent service. However, leisure guests, on the other hand, expect enough time to be spent on them at check-ins, they require information on attractions and leisure facilities such as gym, swimming pool, cultural attraction, and events. One of the respondents mentioned that:

“Business guests are particular about Wi-Fi connectivity; they are not concerned about the décor or interaction, but how the system is. For example, they are concerned about giving attention to things that matter. Leisure guest asks a lot of questions at reservation before they come in, so at check-in, the receptionist should not provide contradictory information” (P19).

Regarding the travel experience of guests, the receptionists mentioned two main categories: experienced or well-travelled guest, and less experienced or less travelled. The receptionist had varying views regarding the expectations of the experienced or well-travelled guests at check-ins. A small minority of the receptionists believed that the experienced guests are more demanding and are harder to satisfy because of their level of exposure, which tends them to make comparisons with hotels they had stayed in previously and request additional services. For instance, one of them said;

“With people who’ve travelled a lot, they expect more from you, because they have seen a lot so they presume things should be the same. But you know every country with its policies of doing things. I quite remember a guest asked, do you have a VIP lounge? Because in other hotels, I have access to the VIP lounge? But here we do not have a VIP lounge; such guests expect they need to experience 5-star services even if they are in a 3-star hotel as most of them feel that way because they think the charges are close to the five-star” (P26 R).

A more significant majority of the receptionists were of the view that the experienced or well-travelled guests are the easiest to serve and satisfy as they already know the hotel policies and what to expect. The receptionist also believed that the experienced guests knew the check-in procedure; therefore, they have fewer complaints. For example:

“guests who have travelled a lot understand hotel policies, for example, if check-in is 2 pm when he gets to the hotel at 10 am he would want to wait” (P19 R).

Some of the receptionists who support the above views expressed their opinion by stating that:

“The frequent travellers ... as soon as they arrive you see them bringing out their passport, their credit card ..., it’s easier dealing with them because they know the system” (P16 R).

“Those that have travelled more, some tend to be very simple and may not even complain, because they tell you this is Africa; you can’t have it. It is a perception because they feel they have travelled and have seen a lot. Some people will come with low expectation because they think it is Africa, but they end up being satisfied because they didn’t expect to get such service (P25 R).

Receptionists reported another way of grouping their guests was by nationality. All receptionists except one were of the view that there are differences in expectation between guest from different nationalities, races, and cultures. The receptionists categorised guests generally to include internationals (Europeans, Americans and Asians) other African nationals, and domestic Ghanaians.

According to a significant majority of receptionists, Asians expect quick service and always ‘seems not to have time’. In the receptionist’s views, Asians expect staff to interact with them and want the service to be delivered just as they desire. They expect complimentary products and services; therefore, the receptionists mentioned they provide information on discounts and complimentary services. One of the respondents voiced this by saying:

The Chinese are just happy people all in a sense that if they get what they are promised fine, but because of their language barrier at times they don’t communicate a lot” (P28).

It is worth mentioning that, as part of the expectation of guests, receptionists indicated that they are aware of communication barriers between them and a significant majority of guests from some Asian countries such as China which is described in detail below (see section 5.3.1).

The perception of a significant majority of receptionists is that Africans generally enjoy human interactions. They also said guests from certain West African countries are quite loud during the interactions at the reception. It was explained in the following terms:

“The Nigerians they are all over, they want to be heard, they want to be known they are rude sometimes, you just have to accommodate them if you know how they are” (P26).

A few receptionists expressed sentiments over Ghanaian guest reactions to service as this quote typifies:

“Our own Ghanaians don’t appreciate service, unlike foreigners who appreciate service. Well, maybe we haven’t come to appreciate people servicing us enough to say that this person has done well” (P15).

However, there were certain common expectations between Asians and Africans. According to a large majority of receptionists, guests from the above-listed nationalities will ask for their local delicacies or food when they are being checked in. The receptionists indicated that such information is critical to the reception experience because guests are pleased if they know they will have their local food on the hotel’s menu and can be disappointed if there is none. A receptionist shared this view below:

“During check-in, especially the Ghanaians and the Nigerians they want their special ‘3ba’ (a local dish of Nigerians). So if we can prepare it for them, or our local ‘banku with pepper’ (a local dish of Ghanaians) at the poolside, they enjoy it most” (P27).

The last category respondents reported on was age; however, there were disagreements between them regarding the expectations of guests using the age category. Whereas some of the respondents believed that younger and less travelled guests were the easiest to handle and had fewer expectations

and are easy-going, others believed otherwise. Some believed that the younger and less travelled guests are the most difficult to deal with, and some could be very hard to please. In the same instance, there were dissenting views regarding the demands and expectations of older and more experienced guests. In contrast, some of the receptionists believed that the older and more experienced guests were easy in their demands and expectations. Others think otherwise. Some receptionists believed that because the older and more experienced guests have travelled wide and far and encountered so many things in their travels, they are very difficult to please, and some even demand specific requirements when interacting with them. All these sentiments have been captured in their statements below.

“The younger people are less interactive; they just want to make sure there is Wi-Fi. If there is no Wi-Fi, then there is a problem no matter how good you are. The younger ones I think they have limited time, they want to get on to the Wi-Fi and start logging on sending their reports. If you are going to check in a younger person, then be ready for them because they need to be gone. “But older people actually enjoy interpersonal moments. For example, you say “Good afternoon, how are you? How was your flight? Is this your first time to Ghana?” ... the older person can take time with you, and they interact with you... (P27, R).

“The older people are very demanding because most of them are here to work, so they demand a lot than the younger guests” (P16 R).

The fact that the respondents grouped the guests into categories is not a surprise. It could be due to their background characteristics in that the majority of them have had tertiary education and have worked for one or more years at the time of the study. With such a background at the reception, it becomes easy for the receptionists to be able to group guests. With training and some years of experience, it becomes easier for them to come up with what they believe are the expectations of the people they encounter. Further, once they have such categories and can identify them based on some characteristics a guest exhibits, it becomes easier for them to interact with the guests and to be able to create the experiences the guests are seeking. However, it must be noted that they may encounter a guest whose characteristics fall under multiple categories. For instance, a well-travelled but young guest who is on just a leisure trip might mistakenly be regarded as a business guest. They might be treated as such which might not fit into the categories of the receptionist and might affect the interactions and the overall guest experiences required.

5.4 Challenges faced by the receptionist and coping strategies adopted

The receptionists in Ghana reported they face several challenges in their role. According to the receptionists, the challenges could be stressful and demotivating. Some of the difficulties mentioned

include; a language barrier, inability to interpret guests' body language due to cultural differences, hard to please customers (guests) and disrespectful guests. These challenges relate to: a) receptionists-guest encounter, b) the physical demands of the job of the receptionists and c) emotional labour.

5.4.1 Challenges related to receptionist-guest encounters

This section reports challenges receptionists face as a result of their face-to-face encounters between them and the guest in a cross-cultural setting.

Every group of people have their way of life, what they value, what is deemed acceptable, and unacceptable (refer to Chapter Two, section 2.2 for the Ghanaian way of life). At the reception, the receptionists bring in their norms and values and are expected to interact with the guests who also have their norms, values and preferences to create the experiences the guest demands or expects. These cultural differences could create misunderstanding and confusion because of differences in values. In this study, one of the main cross-cultural barriers and challenges that almost all the receptionists reported they faced was their inability to understand the language of a significant minority of their guests. The respondents expressed how frustrating it was for them when they had to serve such guests. Though they had mentioned earlier that they used various approaches to learn new languages, they nevertheless encounter some languages that they do not understand. This situation, according to the respondents, not only frustrates them but the guests as well. They believe that in such instances, they probably are not able to meet all the needs of their guests, but they try to do their best. Some of them made comments such as;

"Language barriers is one of the challenges to me; some guests do not speak much English. I also do not seem to understand the accent of some guests, especially Americans (P3 R).

"... I feel sometimes it's the communication. If they are trying to tell you something and you don't get it, usually because of how they speak, they easily become impatient. And they feel you are treating other guests better than they are" (P6 R).

Having to deal with language barriers can be problematic, as it might create misunderstanding and dissatisfaction on both parties involved in the interaction. Once the guest is not satisfied, he/she may not necessarily want to come back to the hotel, and the receptionist may also feel disappointed about not being able to meet the customer's needs. Such an encounter might have an overall implication on the guests' experiences in the long run.

Another challenge that a significant majority of the receptionists believed they encountered was their inability to interpret some gestures and body language displayed by their guests. The receptionists said this was due to the differences in the interpretations given to various body signs and languages in different cultures, which is problematic and causes a great deal of frustration for the receptionists when they are interacting with guests with different cultural backgrounds. One of them expressed the above by stating that:

"... a Chinese point his left fingers at you when they are talking to you, which I find offensive as it is culturally not acceptable here in Ghana" (P37 R).

Deducing from the above, the guest may use specific body language or signs which the receptionists may find offensive in their culture. Nevertheless, the receptionists mentioned that sometimes, some of their guests also find it frustrating and difficult to interpret some body language and signs they exhibit and which their guests might also find offensive. These two scenarios could negatively impact the guests' experiences at reception. A receptionist expressed this with a great deal of frustration in the vignette below:

"As a Ghanaian, and being brought up as a Ghanaian, greeting is very, very important regardless of age or whether you know the person. You meet a stranger, and you are expected to say hello. ... you greet some guests, foreign nationals and they don't even respond, they just pass and go. I feel offended ..." (P6 R).

According to an overwhelming majority of the receptionists, while they aimed at providing hospitable co-creation of experiences for all the guests, they also reported that they encountered 'hostile' experiences with some of their guests. A significant majority of the receptionists mentioned disrespect from guests as one of the challenges they face. The receptionists reported that a minority of guests are so disrespectful both to common national and organisational laws, and traditionally acceptable values. The receptionists also mentioned that certain guests from some particular countries are polite, and it is a joy interacting with them (for example, British and Americans). However, they also commented that some guests from certain noted countries were just too disrespectful and saw themselves as superior to everybody when they visited. And even when receptionists try to point some basic things to them like rules or notices such as 'no smoking' at a 'non-smoking area', that is when such a guest will smoke even more. A receptionist said:

"... values and in terms of even respect for local culture, we sometimes find certain guests who will flout and think yes; because it's Ghana and so what? We have a law you cannot smoke in public, yet you see them smoking, ... the next time they're telling a lie about you because you stopped the person from smoking. If you ask a Ghanaian not to do this, of course, if the law is going

to come after me, I won't do it. But people come, and they think they can flout the law. So as for cultural differences yes, we have a lot of people (guests) who find it very difficult to accept peoples (the Ghanaian)' cultures" (P24 R).

The receptionists further said that such guests see themselves as superior or just show mere disrespect, thinking that they have come to Ghana so they are above everything and everyone else. The receptionists said that whenever such guests visited the hotels, the receptionists would be friendly and welcoming, but the guests would not respond to the greetings. This behaviour worried the receptionists who were trying to be hospitable, particularly in a culture where greetings are very important (see Chapter Two, Section 2.3). These receptionists also believed that some guests are disrespectful to a particular gender (i.e., a reference to the overwhelming prevalence of women as reception staff).

The receptionists were unanimous in confirming that a few guests exhibited unfriendly demeanours and did not respect some cultural codes of conduct. When the receptionist tried to draw the guest's attention to some acceptable values and norms of the hotels, the guests either became angry or took it in bad faith.

All the Front Office Managers acknowledged that the receptionists indeed face several challenges at the reception desk, since they are the first point of call. They emphasised that most of the difficulties are due to cultural differences and the interpretations given to body language and signs. For instance, one FOM observed that even eye contact could be an issue for receptionists. In Ghana, according to the FOM, keeping or maintaining eye contact especially with the elderly is seen or interpreted as disrespectful; however, some of the guests from other parts of the world expect that the receptionists will keep eye contact whereas others would not take kindly to that. The FOM observed that:

"..., with eye contact, we have cultural differences, when you take Ghana, for instance, it is rude for someone to stare directly into your eyes, there should be eye contact, but you should know how to handle it, ..., it's an insult. It's like you are giving the person an eye..." (P8 FOM).

However, a few of the managers were quick to add that most of the receptionists had been in the same positions in different hotels before and might have experienced some of these cultural differences and so it is not new to them.

Also, this study found that the majority of receptionists believed that certain guests from particular countries were rude, especially towards women. So, whenever a female receptionist had to serve such guests, it was a challenging task. One of the female respondents expressed the above and stated that;

“The type of guests I find challenging is Indians and some of the Arabs ... they are so difficult and demanding. I think it is a cultural difference. You know, Indians and Arabs ... their respect for women is low, and especially if what they want is not part of your standards and you want to insist on that, they don’t understand why you, a woman is telling me I cannot have this,” (P5 R).

A few of the receptionists also believed that there existed male-dominant cultures. Therefore guests from such backgrounds disrespect female receptionists and become unreasonable in their demands when they were being served. Similarly, the receptionists also mentioned that some guests from certain religious backgrounds were also disrespectful to female receptionists. Example, few receptionists were frustrated by the assumptions made by a few guests about their behaviour and dress sense.

Further, a large number of receptionists said they were frustrated about having to continually handle guests who were hard to please and added that such guests would complain about almost everything and deliberately abused them emotionally. A few of the receptionists mentioned that there had been instances where such hard-to-please guests were uncontrollable to the point of verbally abusing the receptionists. The receptionists reported there were a couple of times where a few of these guests could even make them feel worthless, as one of them said with a great deal of frustration:

“You feel that you have no sense of your own, nor you do not even deserve to be called a human being” (P38 R).

The receptionists said they had to endure all these challenges, which sometimes becomes so unbearable. It was these comments and observations that led to an analytic focus on the special circumstances that generate a particularly intense version of emotional labour, as discussed in Chapter Eight.

Receptionists face other challenges related to the physical demands of their job such as long hours of work, standing and fatigue, which is discussed next.

5.4.2 Challenges related to the physical demands of the job of the receptionists

The receptionists mentioned other challenges that are not necessarily associated with the guests, but the requirements of their job and other job-related issues.

One of the challenges mentioned by most of the receptionists was the inadequate number of staff (receptionists) and the long hours of standing on their feet. They explained that due to insufficient staff, sometimes they had to work longer hours than expected with the same pay. One of them said:

“One thing challenging about the job is standing for 8 hours ... sometimes it has a toll on you” (P38 R).

They added that on a busy day they will be standing continually for eight (8) hours without resting, which they believe can be detrimental to their health. One receptionist suggested:

“What is challenging at times is the number of hours you have to put in, especially on a very busy day... if you are not very well prepared, it can really be tedious because when you are under pressure...” (P28).

One of the receptionists described the job by saying:

“The job is too stressful, and it is not as rewarding as it seems” (P19 R).

In addition to this, a few of them also complained that they are expected to respond to email queries, answer phone calls and attend to other online demands as well as serving the guests. However, managers do not give room for any delays or mistakes in the form of non-response to emails or other demands that go with the job. They were of the view that all these challenges they endure are because they think their managers do not understand the challenges they have to go through when performing their duties. One of them expressed this by saying:

“Lack of understanding on the part of management, to understand what receptionists do - for example, being penalised because of little mistakes. We must be realistic; we are human beings and cannot absorb everything. I remember on a particular day I had to attend to guest at the same time, I had loads of emails to attend to. I chose to attend to the guest first; therefore, management penalising for not working on the emails” (P19 R)”.

By contrast, some FOMs stated categorically that they (the managers) are very much aware of what the receptionists have to endure while at the line of duty. Still, since the receptionists are the first point of guest contact, managers expect them to act as if everything is going normally and they are ready to give guests what they want for repeat business. The FOM said:

“The front office is like a stage for acting when you leave every bad experience behind you to make the guest happy. This makes the front desk job very stressful” (P20, FOM).

From the above, while managers claim they understand precisely the challenges receptionists encounter in the performance of their duties, the receptionists claim the opposite is the case. This mismatch between the views of managers and receptionists can be challenging in terms of devising coping strategies from the perspective of the management of the hotel.

The findings of this study also indicate that a significant majority of respondents were of the view 'endurance' is the only coping strategy they adopt to manage the emotional labour and the numerous challenges they face on their job.

Regarding whether receptionists would continue working in a hotel environment, there were divided opinions among the respondents. Whereas about two-thirds of the receptionists were of the view that they would continue to work in the hotel industry, one-third of them said they would leave the industry. Though all the receptionists mentioned several challenges they faced, the majority of them mentioned that they would still stay on the job because they have a passion for serving, and this motivates them to keep going. A few of them believe that customer service is life long, and so once an individual gets into it, he/she should keep going until such a time they can no longer cope:

"I feel customer service does not end. It's a life something, and it keeps you going, and for now, I think I can still bear the screams and shouting of the customers" (P16).

Many of these receptionists expressed a great desire to work in the hospitality industry, regardless. The receptionists gave various reason including they love people and want to experience other cultures. The reality for a quarter of them is that the way they are treated and the prominent display of cultural differences, abuse, and all the challenges were proving too difficult for them to bear and that at some point they would leave the industry altogether. A significant minority of such respondents would like to leave and mentioned that they will not leave the industry but are hoping to climb up the organisational ladder to other roles where the stress levels are relatively minimal compared to the reception. A minority of the receptionists explained that once they are in the receptionist role, it looks like they have no life. All their energy is centred around their work, which they think is enough grounds for them to quit at some point to get their life back as they also want to receive the kind of treatment they give others. One of them said:

"...., it is very demanding although you get satisfied, you will also want to have a life. Somebody will say, "does it mean you don't have a life"? But a time will come you might not have all the patience to do that you will surely, probably will also want to go and be treated the way you treated people (P25 R).

The findings in this section reveal that the hotel receptionists in this study faced two main categories of challenges at the front desk: challenges related to the face-to-face encounter with the guest, and challenges related to the job of the reception. The receptionists reported that their encounter with the guest at the reception created some cross-cultural challenges which were worrying to them. They mentioned language barriers between them and international guests, differences in the interpretation of body language and cues, challenges of serving hard to please guests, disrespect from a minority of

guest, and abuse by guests. Receptionists also expressed with a great deal of frustration some challenges they face with regards to their job performance. In their opinion, their job is demanding and stressful, coupled with low staff numbers and management inability to understand what receptionists do. The receptionists said they expected managers to support or comfort them, but the lack of their support is demotivating. Though the receptionist claimed to love their job, culture and human interaction, one out of three receptionists said they would abandon the profession because of the above challenges which they are finding it hard to cope. However, two out of three receptionists said they would continue working in the hotel industry but in different roles, while a few will remain receptionists.

5.5 Conclusion

A detailed description of how hotel staff and managers perceived the reception experiences within the context of hotels in Accra, Ghana, a developing country, was provided in this chapter. Exploring receptionists' perceptions led to the identification of culture as a key element of hotel reception experiences. Thus, hotel receptions experiences are imparted by the destination's culture in terms of local hospitality experience, human interaction, and cultural servicescapes. Regarding the servicescapes, domestic branded hotels are reported to differ in the design of the reception and the use of unique storytelling themes. Ghanaian artefacts and symbols to decorate the reception reflect the Ghanaian culture. This way of designing the front office has been partially adopted by some international hotel brands which provide a touch of local artefacts to their reception. Complementing and supporting the servicescapes is the local dress code of receptionists as well as local music, lighting levels and general ambience of the reception. The hospitality of receptionists was explicitly described as a cultural quality. The experience the hotels offer was special to Ghana and, by extension, Africa more generally, highlighting the importance of communication to the experience.

Further, the receptionists described their job as often requiring them to hide their true feelings and, instead, express feelings that managers think will make their guests satisfied. The findings indicate that the face-to-face contact of the receptionists with guests created some cross-cultural challenges, such as language barriers between receptionists and international guests, abuse by the guest receptionists serve, and difficulties encountered in serving some guests. Apart from that, the receptionist also faces other job-related challenges such as the stress of the job which, coupled with low staff numbers, put a considerable burden on a few receptionists. All the above challenges exacerbate the process of emotional management, according to the receptionists.

In spite of the above challenges, the results showed that receptionist generally chose their job because they love human interaction, which, according to the receptionists, helps them to learn about different cultures. They also reported that they enjoy serving. Although many of these receptionists expressed a great desire to work in the hospitality industry because of their love of people and culture, the reality for some is that the way they are treated and the cultural differences that are often prominent, coupled with other challenges they encounter, means that at some point they expected to leave the industry.

This chapter explored staff and managers' perceptions of the hotel reception experience. Since guests are at the centre of the experience, it is also necessary to explore the guest's perception. The next chapter presents and discusses the findings of guest expectations and experiences.

Chapter 6

Hotel Reception Experience: Guests' perspectives

6.1 Introduction

The previous chapter reported the receptionists' and managers' experiences and what they believe are the expectations of their guests. This chapter presents the results of guests' perceptions of their hotel reception experience, and compares them to those of the receptionists and their managers in the hotels in Accra, Ghana. The chapter starts by providing information on the profile of hotels, and the demographic and travel characteristics of the sample participants (hotel guests). The profile of hotels includes their star rating and brand.

The chapter then proceeds to report the guests' pre-arrival reception expectations and compares them with their arrival experiences in various types of hotels. Further, the chapter reports on how socio-demographic, travel and hotel characteristics are associated with the expectations and experiences of the hotel reception by the guests. Most data were analysed and presented quantitatively, but the quantitative findings are supplemented with qualitative data from the guests' responses to open-ended questions in the questionnaire.

The aim of this study is to explore the hotel reception experience and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in this experience within a developing economy's (Ghana) context. The research questions guiding the study were:

- a. a) What are the key elements of the hotel reception experience?
 - b) In what ways does the developing country context impact on these elements?
- b. What are the expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience of different stakeholders (guests, staff, and managers)?
- c. How do the different characteristics of key stakeholders influence their expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience (for example, culture, age, gender, and travel experience)?
- d. What impact do hotel characteristics have on expectations and experiences of the hotel reception?

The chapter is organised around the research question (two, three and four) and so considers pre-arrival expectations first and then arrival experiences.

6.2 Profile of Hotels and Respondents

This section presents the findings on the profiles of the hotels in the study sample. The profiles of hotels include their star rating and hotel brand. Again, it presents the results of the socio-demographic and travel characteristics of guests. Demographic characteristics of guests include gender, age, level of education, and region of nationality, while their travel characteristics includes main purpose of trip, previous stays at the same hotel and the number of nights a guest plans to stay at the current hotel for the visit.

6.2.1 Hotel Profiles

The profiles of each of the hotels sampled in the study are presented in Table 6.1. The hotels in this study were either international hotels or domestic hotels. The International hotels used in Ghana were hotels which were either owned by foreigners or franchise. The domestic branded hotels were locally owned and managed hotels. Three out of the six hotels were international branded while the other three were domestic hotels. A larger proportion of the sample, 197 were staying at domestic hotels with the other 164 staying at international hotels.

There were three different categories of star ratings of hotels in this study; 3, 4 and 5-star rated hotels. Of these, the only 5-star hotel was domestic branded (refer Table 6.1 below).

Nearly two out of three guests, who participated in the study were staying at 3-star hotels (210 guests), regardless of the brand, while fewer than half were staying at 4-star and 5-star hotels, (94 and 57 guests) in the central business district of Accra.

Table 6.1 Hotel Characteristics

Hotel characteristics	Number of responses	
Hotel characteristic	Number of hotels	Number of guests
<i>Hotel Brands</i>		
Domestic hotels	3	197 (55.0%)
International hotels	3	164 (45.0%)
Total	6	361 (100%)
<i>Star rating</i>		
3-star hotel	3	210 (58.0%)
4-star hotel	2	94 (26.0%)
5-star hotels	1	57 (16.0%)
Total	6	361 (100%)

6.2.2 Socio-demographic characteristics of guests

The demographic characteristics of the sample are presented in Table 6.2. The total number of guests who took part in the study were 361. However, responses to some questions were less than the total number. The slight differences in the numbers for some characteristic is because some participants did not respond to particular questions. There were more males, 72% (259 guests) surveyed than females 28% (101), and the majority, 83% (298) were younger than the age of fifty. The sample was highly qualified with close to 88 % (307) having a tertiary degree or higher (45% undergraduate, 43% postgraduate degree). For the purpose of data analysis, the nationality of respondents has been grouped into regions except for Ghanaians. About three-quarters, 74.0% (269) of the guests were international with a quarter of the participants being Ghanaian 26.0% (92).

Table 6.2 Socio-demographic characteristics of Guests

Socio-demographic characteristics of Guests	Number of responses
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	259 (72.0%)
Female	101 (28.0%)
Total	360 (100%)
<i>Age</i>	
18-29	68 (19.0%)
30-39 years	121(34.0%)
40-49	109 (30%)
50-59 years	52 (14.0%)
Over 60 years	10 (3.0%)
Total	360 (100%)
<i>Education</i>	
No formal certificate	4 (1.0%)
Trade qualification	6 (3.0%)
Diploma	30 (8.0%)
Undergraduate	163 (45.0%)
Postgraduate diploma/degree	154 (43.0%)
Total	357 (100%)
<i>Region (of nationality)</i>	
Ghanaians (Africans)	92 (26.0%)
Other African nationals	87 (24.0%)
Europeans	98 (27.0%)
Americans	50 (14.0%)
Asians	24 (7.0%)
Middle East	5 (1.0%)
Oceania	5 (1.0%)
Total	361 (100%)

6.2.3 Travel characteristics of guests

The main purpose of visit for guests in the sample was for business (220), while a small proportion travelled for leisure/holidays (90), conference/convention (38), and visiting friends and family (13) (see Table 6.3). Further analysis of the differences between business and leisure guests is presented (see section 6.2.4).

Three-quarters of the guests 250, had stayed previously at the current hotels, while only a quarter was staying for the first time, 101. This means the majority can be assumed to have expectations of the reception experience, based on prior experience. Typically, guests were staying from one to four nights 271, in their current hotel with close to half of the sample 172, staying for two to three nights. As indicated earlier, there are slight differences in the numbers for some characteristic because some participants did not respond to particular questions.

Table 6.3 Travel characteristics of guests

Travel characteristics of guests	Number of responses
<i>The main purpose of trip</i>	
Business	220 (61.0%)
Leisure/holidays	90 (25.0%)
Conference/convention	38 (10.0%)
visiting friends and relatives (VFR)	13 (4.0%)
Total	361 (100%)
<i>A previous stay at the same Hotel</i>	
None in the past	101 (28.8%)
Once in the past	135 (38.5%)
Twice in the past	64 (18.2%)
Thrice in the past	24 (6.8%)
Four times plus	27 (7.7%)
Total	351 (100)
<i>Number of nights guest planned to stay at the current hotel for this visit</i>	
1 night	47 (13.0%)
2 nights	91 (25.2%)
3 nights	81 (22.4%)
4 nights	52 (14.4%)
5 nights	37 (10.2%)
6 nights plus	53 (14.8%)
Total	361 (100%)

6.2.4 Demographic differences between the business guest and the leisure guest

There were differences in characteristics between the leisure and business guests based on their demographics (see Table 6.4). In order to ascertain whether these differences are significant, a chi-square analysis was conducted on the demographic variables (P-value 0.05). The data were grouped for ease of analysis as follows: age; 18 - 39 years, 40 - 59 years, and 60 years and above; Nationality; Ghanaians, other Africans, and international; Education; degree postgraduate degrees and others (no formal qualification, trade certificates and diplomas); Purpose of travel for business or leisure, and the number of times they travelled for such purposes. This purpose of travel was grouped into; 1 -5 times, and 6 - 10 times plus, either for business or leisure; Previous hotel stay; none in the past, once in the past, twice and thrice in the past, four times plus.

Table 6.4 Differences between leisure guest and business guests

Guest characteristics	Frequency and Percentages		Total	Chi-Square analysis		
	Leisure (%)	Business (%)		Leisure (%)	Business (%)	Significance
Gender						
Male	57 (22)	202 (78)	259	22	78	X=18.2; P=.001*
Female	45 (44.5)	56 (55.5)	101	44.5	55.5	
Age						
18—39yrs	61 (32.3)	128 (67.7)	189	32.3	67.7	X=2.8; P=.24
40-59yrs	39 (24.2)	122 (75.8)	161	24.2	75.8	
60yrs and above	3 (30)	7 (70)	10	30	70	
Nationality						
Ghanaians	37 (41.1)	53 (58.9)	90	51.1	58.9	X=9.4; P=.02*
Other African Nationals	18 (20)	72 (80)	90	20	80	
International	47 (26.3)	132 (73.7)	179	26.3	73.7	
Education						
Others	19 (46.3)	22 (53.7)	41	46.3	53.7	X=18.8; P=.001*
Degree	57 (34.5)	108 (65.5)	165	34.5	65.5	
Postgraduate	26 (16.9)	128 (83.1)	154	16.9	83.1	
Hotel brand						
International hotel	62 (31.5)	135 (68.5)	197	31.5	68.5	X=1.8; P=.17
Domestic hotel	41 (25)	123 (75)	164	25	75	
Frequency of travel						
a. Business purpose						
1-5 times	49 (23.4)	160 (76.6)	209	23.4	76.6	X=12; P=.007*
6-10 times plus	12 (12.1)	87 (87.9)	99	12.1	87.9	
b. Leisure purpose						
1-5 times	79 (45.9)	93 (54.1)	172	45.9	54.1	X=3; P=.2
6-10 times plus	8 (66.7)	4 (33.3)	12	66.7	33.3	
A previous stay at the same Hotel						
None in the past	28 (27.7)	73 (72.3)	101	27.7	72.3	X=3.86; P=.27
Once in the past	44 (32.6)	91 (67.4)	135	32.6	67.4	
Twice and Thrice in the past	18 (20.5)	70 (79.5)	88	20.5	79.5	
Four times plus	7 (25.9)	20 (74.1)	27	25.9	74.1	
Hotel star/class						
3-star	54 (25.7)	156 (74.3)	210	25.7	74.3	X=2.6; P=.32
4-star	32 (34.0)	62 (66.0)	94	34.0	66.0	
5-star	17 (30)	40 (70)	57	30	70	

Business guests were mostly male, 78% , while males who travelled for leisure were a lower proportion of 22% , Over half of the females, 55.5% , was travelling for business while the remainder 44.5% ,was travelling for pleasure. The gender difference between business guests and leisure guests is highly significant, given a chi-square test result with an X value of 18.2, and a p -value of .001. But there was no significant difference between age and the purpose of travel (X value is 2.8, and the p -value is .24).

A majority of the business guests travelled for business rather than leisure in all the regions of nationality. Ghanaians who travelled for business were 58.9% (53) while those who were travelling for leisure were 41.1% (37). Other African business travellers were 80% (72) compared to 20% (18) leisure

travellers. Internationals who travelled for business were 73.7% (132) while those travelling for leisure were 26.3 (47). In terms of region of nationality, the Chi-square tests show that there is a significant relationship between respondents' nationality and the guest reason for travel given X value is 9.4, and the p -value is .02. The implication here is that the majority of guests from all the nationalities sampled travelled for business than for leisure

Postgraduate degree holders who travelled for business were 83.1% (128) compared with 16.9% who travelled for leisure. Business guests who were degree holders were 65.5% (108) while leisure travellers who were degree holders were 34.5% (57). The differences between the business guests and the leisure guests are highly significant regarding their educational qualification. The X value is 18.8, and the p -value is .001.

There was a significant difference between frequency of travel of guests and their purpose of travel (being business or leisure). Business people who had travelled 1-5 times in the past for business was 76.6% (160) compared to leisure 23.4% (49). Similarly, business guests who had travelled 6-10 times in the past for business comprised 89.9% (87) while few leisure guests travelled the same number of times for business, 12.1% (12). The X value is 12, and the p -value is .007 for frequency of travel for business and leisure guests.

There are slight differences in the percentage of the number of guests who stayed at the various star rated hotels either for business or leisure. The differences in the distributions amongst those star ratings between leisure and business guests, however, are not statistically significant.

The findings show that guests varied in characteristics. These characteristics are education, purpose of travel, and nationality. Given guests came from a range of cultural backgrounds implies that their responses cover a breadth of experiences relevant to this study. A large majority had tertiary level education. While there is little variation in education level, the high level of education may mean that participant guests had had prior exposure to people from other different cultural backgrounds. In turn, such cultural experiences might have exposed participants to differences in the socio-cultural background of people, which might have impacted on their expectations and perceptions before their travel to the study location. Further, the responding guests mostly came to the hotels either for business or for leisure with a few visiting family and friends. These findings are similar to the purpose of travel for all visitors to Ghana for business. However visiting friends and relatives (VFR) is generally higher than leisure contrary to the findings (See Chapter Two, section 2.6). These varying reasons for travelling likely affected expectations as well.

Most guests in this study had visited the same hotel more than once. While some had been at their hotels more than four times, meaning they would have encountered the ‘reception experiences’ and could distinguish between them based on their previous experiences. Besides, such guests are well travelled and are likely to have been able to differentiate between experiences. In that case, they might have developed a clear sense of the kind of reception experiences they desire.

6.3 The hotel guest decision making on the choice of hotels

The hotel guests gave an account of the factors they considered when choosing a hotel brand. A list of eight factors one might consider when deciding on the choice of a hotel was provided in the guest questionnaire (see Appendix D). Guests were asked to indicate how important (on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 represents not at all important and 7 extremely important) each of the factors were when choosing a hotel. The data were initially analysed descriptively, using mean, and standard deviation. ‘N’ stands for the total number of guests. The differences in the total may be due to non-responses to some of the questions. The analysis is presented in Table 6.5. Further details of the data analysis can be found in Chapter Four (Methods).

Table 6.5 Factors guests considered when choosing a hotel brand (Descriptive Statistics)

Factors guests considered when choosing hotel brands (on a scale of 1-7)	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Past/previous reception experience with the brand	360	5.99	1.05
The hotel has a well-known brand name	361	5.62	1.22
Check-in expectation is based on the brand	361	5.61	1.20
Brand recommendation from family, friends, or colleagues.	361	5.37	1.35
My loyalty to the brand	361	5.23	1.38
The hotel is internationally branded	361	5.16	1.53
The hotel is locally branded	361	4.95	1.51
The hotel is part of a chain of hotels	360	4.73	1.43

Guests who travelled to Accra had certain factors important to them when choosing a hotel brand. The guest viewed ‘past/previous reception experience with the brand’ as very important (5.99) followed by the hotel’s well-known brand name (5.62), and brand recommendation from families (5.61), friends or colleagues (see Table 6.4). This is not surprising as a large proportion of the guests (71.2%) had previously stayed at the hotels (see section 6.3 travel characteristics of guests).

6.3.1 Factors considered by leisure and business guests when choosing a hotel brand

In order to establish significant differences in the mean values of the important factors guest consider when choosing a hotel independent t-tests were performed. Travel characteristics of guests were merged into two categories, business and leisure (comprising holidays, conference/convention, and visiting friends and relatives). This merging was done for ease of data analysis and reporting, and because some categories had small sample sizes. The results of the independent sample T-tests are presented in Table 6.6 (See Chapter Four, section 4.5.2, for further details on the data analysis).

Table 6.6 Factors considered by leisure and business guests when choosing a hotel brand (independent sample t-test)

Factors guests considered when choosing hotel brands (on a scale of 1-7)	Leisure	Business	sig. t-value, p-value
Past/previous reception experience with the brand	5.8±1.2	6.1±0.9	t=2.6; p=.01*
The hotel has a well-known brand name	5.4±1.1	5.7±1.3	t=1.5; p=.1
Check-in expectation is based on the brand	5.4±0.9	5.6±1.3	t=1.3; p=.1
Brand recommendation from family, friends, or colleagues	5.7±1.1	5.3±1.4	t=2.6; p=.01*
My loyalty to the brand	5.1±0.1	5.2±0.1	t=1.0; p=.3
The hotel is internationally branded	4.8±1.4	5.2±1.6	t=2.0; p=.04*
The hotel is locally branded	5.1±1.3	4.8±1.5	T=1.6; P=.1
The hotel is part of a chain of hotels	4.5±1.5	4.8±1.4	T=2.0; P=.04*

*denotes statistically significant difference (p-value ≤ .05)

The t-test results in Table 6.6 shows significant differences between guests travelling for business, and leisure regarding factors considered when choosing hotel brands. The t-test found significant differences between the mean responses of leisure and business, on factors such as past/previous reception experience with the brand (T=2.6; P=.01), brand recommendation from family, friends, or colleagues, (t=2.6; p=.01*), The hotel is internationally branded (t=2.0; p=.04*) and the hotel is part of a chain of hotels (T=2.0; P=.04*).

According to previous literature, word of mouth is known to be a particularly trusted channel when it comes to brand referrals (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.4). It is more likely for individuals to believe word of mouth referrals than advertisements, and therefore, it is not surprising that some of the guests came to the hotels they were residing in because it was referred to them. The hotel being internationally branded (T=2.0; P=.04), and the hotel being part of a chain of hotels (T=2.0; P=.04) were the most significant of the remainder in terms of choice of hotel.

The findings of this study also addressed expectations and perceptions about the hotel reception experiences by guests. These analyses are reported in the next section.

6.4 The hotel guest expectations and perception of experiences of hotel receptions

Hotel guests have expectations before service delivery and can assess whether their expectation was met after they have experienced the service. The findings in this section provide answers to the research question two of the study which state:

“What are the expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience by different stakeholders (guests, staff, and managers)?”

A list of elements guests might expect, and experience, was provided, and guests were asked to indicate how important (on a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 one represents ‘not at all important’ and 7 extremely important) each of the elements is to them when they are checking into a hotel (see Appendix D, Questionnaire). The elements were selected based on the main theories guiding the study: co-creation, staff attributes, reception service and servicescapes. Co-creation involves the interaction between the guest and the receptionist at check-in. Staff attributes refer to qualities of the reception staff given that the service is co-created. Servicescapes describe the design and the ambience of the hotel reception and reception services refer to the services offered by the hotel at the front office. When combined, these elements comprise ‘the experience economy’ (the overall experience of the guest). Descriptive statistical analysis was undertaken, and the findings are presented in Tables 6.6 to 6.13 with ‘N’ representing the total number of participants. The findings for pre-arrival expectations are presented first, followed by the arrival experience. For the purposes of analysis and reporting the list of elements are grouped under these headings; guests face-to-face interaction, staff attributes, servicescapes, and reception service.

The quantitative responses are reported first followed by the qualitative responses the guests provided for the open-ended questions (What were the three most important things for you when checking-in at this hotel on this visit? What did you like most about the check-in (reception) experience? What were the elements of the experience that did not match your expectation, if any? What will be your lasting memory of the reception experience you had at this hotel if any?). Samples of quotes from the guests are also included. In terms of reporting and to ensure confidentiality for the qualitative responses, I used the letter ‘G’ for guests, and the respondent’s allocated number (example: ‘G10’). Further information about how these respondents were recruited is presented in the methods chapter (Chapter Four, section 4.3).

6.4.1 Hotel guest pre-arrival expectations

As indicated earlier, hotel guests' pre-arrival expectations are grouped into: guests' face-to-face interaction with the receptionists, staff attributes, reception service, and servicescape experience.

6.4.1.1 Guests face-to-face interaction (co-creation) expectations

At the reception, the guests interact face-to-face with the receptionists to create the reception experiences. Included in guests' face-to-face interaction (co-creation) are the statements: guests expect the receptionists to; communicate clearly to them in a language they understand, treat them with value, acknowledge and welcome them, and show interest and spend an appropriate amount of time to deal with their needs. While all features of the reception experience (co-creation, servicescapes, staff attribute, and reception service) were ranked as important expectations, elements contributing to guests' face-to-face interactions (co-creation) with the receptionist were ranked as being the most important (see Table 6.7). A majority of hotel guests scored six out of seven for all the factors relating to face-to-face interactions except one; their expectation for an escort to their rooms is low compared to the others, though this is part of guests' face-to-face interaction (co-creation).

Table 6.7 Pre-arrival expectations of face-to-face interactions

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Guests face-to-face interaction expectation	N		
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	360	6.26	.74
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	359	6.23	.84
I am given a welcome at the reception	359	6.19	.80
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	360	6.18	.81
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	361	6.16	.77
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	361	6.10	.86
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	361	6.00	.88
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	360	5.89	.96

This quantitative finding was supported by results from the qualitative part of the survey which emphasized that, for guests, an important expectation is the kind of interaction they will have with staff, where communication in various forms is key. Among guests' expectations are being talked to in a language they know, being treated with respect and value, and being treated with hospitality as the quote below typifies:

...“I experienced hospitality right from the airport when I was picked up by the hotel shuttle to the front desk where the staff warmly greeted me with smiles” (G79)...

A significant majority of the guests commented that the hotel reception experience starts from the airport where a complimentary shuttle takes the guests to the hotel. At the entrance to the reception, guests are greeted and welcomed by well-dressed staff (concierge and porters) before they finally arrive at the reception. This comment from guests confirm what receptionists and their managers said in Chapter Five about the hotel reception experience starting from the airport.

6.4.1.2 Staff attributes expectations

The second set of factors that were important to guests were staff attributes which is understandable given the link between face-to-face interaction (co-creation) and staff attributes. Included in staff attributes are; guests expected the hotel receptionist to be friendly, courteous, polite, welcoming, smartly dressed, and professional in appearance, and to understand their special requirements during check-in (see Table 6.8).

Table 6.8 Pre-arrival expectations of staff attributes

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff attributes expectation			
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	359	6.19	.83
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	358	6.16	.78
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	361	6.12	.84
The receptionist is professional in appearance	360	6.00	.93
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	361	5.16	1.37

According to a significant majority of guests (per their qualitative responses), they expect receptionists to be knowledgeable about the check-in procedure and the hotel's services and facilities, to have a pleasant personality and that they will smile upon seeing the guest. Other qualities include responsiveness, being caring, time conscious, being understanding, and listening and speaking clearly to guests. As was remarked by one of the guests in a five-star domestic hotel,

"...receptionist should exhibit knowledge of the hotel's services and facilities" (G441).

Generally, they had lower expectations that the receptionist's appearance would reflect the culture of the destination. (This finding is contrary to the expectation of guests from the domestic branded hotels, see section 6.6).

6.4.1.3 Reception service expectations

The results also show that guests expected a high level of service at the hotel reception. The service includes accurate records of the guest's booking, a fast and efficient check-in, fast-internet connectivity, hospitality, good facilities, and system operation, professional services, adequate information about the hotel and the destination, personalized service, and security. In comparison,

the availability of information at check-in about services and facilities was less important (see Table 6.9). From this Table 6.9, guests were most focused on the check-in process rather than additional information that might be available at the reception. This suggests that receptions are seen, unsurprisingly, as places that confirm bookings and set the guest up officially in the hotel. Other services are secondary.

Table 6.9 Pre-arrival expectations of reception service

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reception service expectation			
The check-in is prompt and efficient	361	6.28	.86
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	360	6.28	.82
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	359	5.74	.99
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	360	5.68	1.01

6.4.1.4 Servicescapes expectations

The servicescape of the front office was important to guests. The guests expected the reception area to be neat and tidy and attractive. The highest score was six out of seven, and the lowest score was five out of seven which was above average.

Table 6.10 Pre-arrival Expectation of servicescapes

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Servicescapes expectation			
The reception area is neat and tidy	360	6.24	.71
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	361	6.04	.78
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	359	5.99	.86
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	359	5.95	.80
The layout and signage of the hotel makes it easy for me to find the reception	361	5.86	1.08
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	361	5.85	.86
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	360	5.69	.94
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	361	5.15	1.40

6.4.1.1 Summary of guest expectation

The findings above show that guests expected face-to-face interactions with receptionists who have professional attributes. These two expectations are linked to co-creation. Guests also expected a high level of service and well-designed and comfortable front office servicescapes.

6.4.2 Hotel guest perceptions of hotel reception experiences

After the guests were checked-in, they evaluated the performance of the services of the reception based on the interaction. Experiences matched expectations with a few exceptions. Guests' face-to-face interaction received the highest rating in terms of performance, while servicescapes had the lowest.

6.4.2.1 Guests perception of face-to-face interaction (co-creation) experiences

Overall, the guests' perception was that the receptionists communicated clearly in a language they understood, showed an interest, and spent an appropriate amount of time on their needs. Further, guests indicated that they were acknowledged, warmly welcomed, valued, and escorted to their rooms (see Table 6.11). These findings indicate that guests were satisfied with their expectations about their face-to-face interactions at the reception.

Table 6.11 Guest perception of face-to-face interaction experiences

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Guest face to face interaction experience			
The receptionist spoke to me in a language I understood	360	6.33	.74
The receptionist communicated clearly to me	361	6.29	.70
I was given a welcome at the reception	360	6.25	.80
I was treated as a valued guest	361	6.18	1.01
I was escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	360	6.18	.86
The Receptionist seemed to be interested in my needs during check-in	359	6.08	.93
I was acknowledged immediately I entered the reception area	361	6.05	.99
The receptionist spent an appropriate amount of time on my needs	361	6.01	1.06

The qualitative findings also indicated that guests' face-to-face interactions matched expectations better than did expectations of other attributes. Guests who stayed at both international and domestic hotels were particularly satisfied with their interactions with the receptionists who were welcoming and friendly, polite, well mannered, and approachable. For instance, two guests, one from the three-star international hotel, and the other from four-star domestic hotels, commented:

"They made my wife and I feel very important (G277)"

"I cherished the reception the hotel offered, the free shuttle from the airport, the warm reception, and the swift check-in was more than I imagined" (G390).

6.4.2.2 Guests perception of staff attributes experiences

The attributes staff exhibited at check-in were evaluated as important to guests. Regarding staff attributes the guests indicated they were satisfied with receptionists' friendliness and courtesy,

professionalism, their knowledge of the check-in procedures, and the receptionist's understanding of their special needs while checking them in (see Table 6.12).

Table 6.12 Guest perception of staff attributes experiences

Items	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Staff attributes experience			
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous	359	6.29	.79
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	361	6.23	.76
The Receptionist was professional	361	6.15	.83
The receptionist understood my special requirements while checking-in	360	6.03	.93
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	359	4.75	1.85

A greater majority of the guests commented on the professionalism and friendliness the receptionist displayed as they stated;

"The staff exhibited a high level of professionalism, courtesy, and respect when I was checked-in" (G184).

"The staff seemed prepared for my arrival, and I was called by name immediately I walked into the Reception area" (G414).

Staff expressions of care and genuine empathy for guests can also enhance the reception experience as indicated by a significant minority of guests. Guests might go through certain challenges which might not be the fault of the hotel, but the staff show of concern to their plight made an impression. A participant who stayed at a three-star international hotel had this to say about the experience;

"I missed the airport shuttle and took a taxi to the hotel. I was greeted by name and a smile at the door. The receptionist empathized with me and asked whether I was okay" (G 179)."

For a majority of guests, communication is key to check-in experiences, whether verbal or non-verbal. The way staff speak to guests matters to them. A majority of guests indicated the receptionist they met sounded clear and had good command over the English language. A minority of guests said they were delighted to be spoken to in their local language, for example, French. Others indicated they were pleased to meet a staff member who comes from the same country as them. For example, a participant from a four-star domestic hotel remarked;

"..., I was also attended to by a Chinese who spoke to me in my local language" (G489).

However, a few hotel guests felt the staff could not speak well to them, and so were dissatisfied with the service encounter. A participant who stayed at a four-star domestic hotel said;

"Some staff found it difficult understanding what I say" (G161)

6.4.2.3 Guest perception of hotel reception service experience

Regarding the features of the reception service, guests evaluated the check-in as prompt and efficient, and their booking records were accurate. Guests had lower estimations of finding the features of the hotel and attractions in the at check-in than the other aspects (see Table 6.13).

Table 6.13 Guest perception of hotel reception service experience: descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reception service experience			
The hotel's records of my booking was accurate	361	6.27	.79
The check-in was prompt and efficient	361	6.18	1.05
I was able to find out the features of the hotel at check-in	360	5.82	.94
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	361	5.70	.97

The personalized services the front desk offers to guests, and the time frame within which they deliver services, are important to guests regarding the check-in experience. They were warmly welcomed and checked in without delay by professional receptionists and were ushered by a porter into their rooms. A guest from a four-star domestic hotel described the experience this way:

"It was quite fast and straightforward; I wasn't expecting much difference from a British colonized country" (G311).

A few guests were of the view that their reception experience 'felt special' when they were checked-in by a highly ranked member of the hotel, such as the Front Office Manager or the Rooms Divisions Manager. As remarked by a guest from a three-star international hotel;

"I was checked-in by one of the Managers, a sign that they care about the service to their guests" (G386).

In Chapter Five receptionists and managers said they help at the reception to check-in guests. Further, some guests indicated that all information on attractive sites and scenes they needed were available to them at the reception and that this availability exceeded their expectations.

However, there was a certain aspect of the service that a few guests were not satisfied with, which includes delays at check-in. A guest from a five-star hotel remarked;

I had to wait as a guest checked out of my room before I was checked in. I think this should have been sorted out even before my arrival (G460).

Interestingly, one factor that had an impact on experience was price. Some guests became dissatisfied if they felt that the amount paid for the service was not matched by the quality of service they expected, as remarked by a participant who stayed at a three-star international hotel;

“The experience did not actually meet the price charged” (G384).

6.4.2.4 Guests perception of Servicescapes experiences

The features of servicescapes, which were rated high in terms of performance, were the reception area being neat and tidy, attractive, relaxing, and having appealing décor. Guests scored the performance of the hotel lower in terms of the temperature, furniture/furnishing of the reception, and the design reflecting the culture of the destination. This lower score on this attribute might be expected because these results combine the international and domestic hotels (see Table 6.14).

Table 6.14 Guest perception of servicescapes experiences

Item	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Servicescapes experience			
The reception area was neat and tidy	360	6.11	.79
The reception area looked attractive as I approach	361	6.03	.84
The décor of the reception was visually appealing	360	6.00	.89
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area made me feel relaxed	361	5.94	.90
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	361	5.93	.93
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	361	5.90	.90
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate	359	5.69	1.05
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	356	4.92	1.87

The relaxing ambience of the hotel front desk is essential in guest experiences. This ambience includes the interior décor such as lighting and the display of artefacts, especially artefacts of cultural significance, and how neat the reception is. A significant majority of guests were intrigued by the display of African culture at the reception. Guests appreciated the design of the reception, background music, and the appearance of the receptionist. Guests commented:

“Classic African themed reception design, very beautiful” (G215).

“The reception is the only place I may get to see a bit of the culture of the place, especially when I am not able to visit their tourist sites” (G439)

“Clean front desk, I will surely recommend this hotel to others’ (G180)”

Again, the guests indicated that they were expecting a reception with some designs that reflected Ghanaian culture, but, on arrival, their expectations were met. In Chapter Five, it can be recalled that the receptionists and their managers were very particular about the appearance of their respective servicescapes regardless of whether or not the hotel is international or locally branded. Domestic hotels were particularly focused on having a servicescape that was designed with themes which are Ghanaian or, more broadly, African. In contrast, the international hotels were infusing or making attempts to blend the local designs into their brand culture to create a memorable experience and exceed the expectations of their guests.

However, not all guests had positive feedback about the design of the front desks. One international hotel's front desk design was deemed too colourful by a couple of guests. Quite a significant minority of guests think some of the international hotels should be designed to reflect the destination's culture. As remarked by a guest from a three-star international hotel who compared the theme of an international hotel in South Africa to Ghana:

"A similar international branded hotel I lodged at in South Africa had a few African artefacts at the reception to depict the destination's culture" (G100).

An easily accessible front desk and some level of privacy were important to guests. Some guests judged the experience of not having much privacy during check-in and felt the front desk was too noisy. A guest from a three-star international hotel indicated;

"The design of the front desk, which is close to the restaurant and lounge bar does not give much privacy" (G77).

The receptionists' appearance specifically their dress codes in the hotels were also ranked by the guests. They (guests) were of the view that they expected dress codes to reflect local culture more than what they actually saw on arrival.

In Chapter Five, the receptionists and their managers mentioned how particular they were about their dress codes, as they believed it was an indication of professional appearance and assurance to the guests that their expectations would be met. Such appearance, according to the receptionists, attracted admiration from the guests, evidenced by requests for pictures with them and the designs within the servicescapes (refer to section 5.3.2).

6.4.2.1 Summary of the guest experience

The findings presented in this section suggest that the guest's perception of the hotel reception experience in Ghana is imparted by human interaction and the cultural servicescape of the front office. From the servicescapes perspective, the local design of the reception is important to guest experiences by providing an attractive cultural design and artefacts. Human interactions take the form of guests' perception that they have had a warm face-to-face interaction with staff at check-in. Guests stressed that the human element in the service experience makes a difference to the reception experience; an observation supported both by quantitative and qualitative data.

6.4.3 Guest perception of overall reception experience

Participants were asked to rate their overall experience on a three-point scale namely: *'better than expected'*, *'same as expected as'* and *'worse than expected'*, and then further explain their choice of

responses (See Appendix D for the questionnaire). Their responses were quantitatively analysed and presented in the pie chart below (see Figure 6.1).

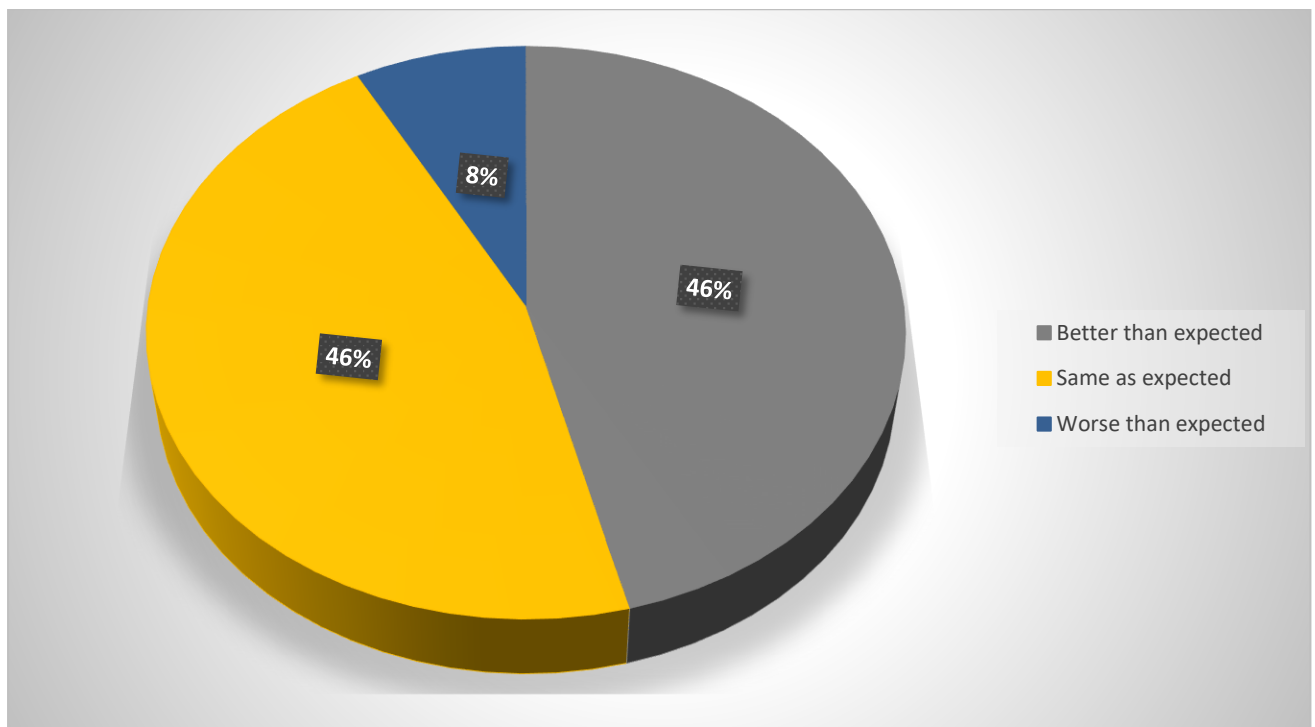


Figure 6.1 Guest overall reception experience

Participants who rated the overall reception experience 'better than expected' (46%) indicated their expectation was more than met because they did not expect such a high standard of service from either a locally branded hotel, hotels in Ghana or a developing country. A participant from a four-star domestic hotel said;

I wasn't expecting this standard of service from a hotel in a developing country even though my friends were so confident in the services of the hotel when they were advising me to choose it. (G141)

The majority of participants who rated the overall experience 'better than expected' used the following descriptions for the experience; 'excellent,' 'fantastic,' 'impressive,' delightful, 'amazing hospitality,' 'high standard of service', 'remarkable service by all standards,' and 'great improvement'. According to the participants, the check-in was quick, efficient, and professionally done, guests were treated well, valued, and African hospitality at its best was exhibited. A participant from a three-star international hotel remarked;

"Awesome reception experience, fast service, professional and friendly staff (G97)".

A significant majority of the participants who rated the overall experience 'same as expected' (46%) were participants who had stayed at the hotel in the past and deemed the experience as consistent with previous experiences. A participant from a three-star domestic hotel remarked;

"Great service just like what I experienced the last time I was here."

A few other respondents felt the service was not extraordinary, satisfactory, matched the standard of the hotel, or they did not have a high expectation for the experience. A respondent from a three-star international hotel said;

"Seriously, I wasn't expecting much from a 3-star hotel from a developing country like Ghana." (G266)

Guests who rated the overall experience 'worse than expected' (8%) gave reasons such as delays during check-in, poor service, and the expectations were generally not met.

The findings in this section show that the guests were generally satisfied with their reception experience, similar to the perception of receptionists and their managers in Chapter Five. The subsequent section digs deeper into the data by discussing how demographic and travel characteristics are associated with reception experiences in this study.

6.5 Association of demographic and travel characteristics of guests on their expectations and experiences of the hotel reception

The purpose of this section is to answer research question three of the study;

"How do the different characteristics of key stakeholders influence their perceptions and expectations of hotel reception experience, for example, culture, age, gender, and travel experience?"

The variables used for this purpose were grouped into two categories: demographic characteristics and travel characteristics. Demographic variables contained four attributes: gender, age, nationality, and highest education level attained. The travel characteristics had two attributes; the purpose of travel, and travel experience. For the purpose of statistical analysis, the demographic variables were grouped (merged) as; age (18-39 years, 40-59 years, 60-70 years and above), nationality (Ghanaians, other Africans, and Internationals), highest education (degree, postgraduate degree, and less educated).

Guests' demographics/travel characteristics were statistically tested with One-way Analysis of Variance test (One-way ANOVA) and an independent-sample T-test to identify their relationship to

guests' expectations, and reception experiences (Appendix G). One-way ANOVA test indicated statistically significant differences among variables. Guests' demographic and travel characteristics functioned as independent variables (IVs), whereas the list of expectation and performance variables functioned as dependent variables (DVs). The dependent variables are grouped into; 'co-creation' - the interaction between the guest and the receptionist on arrival at check-ins, 'staff attributes' - the qualities of the reception staff given that the service is co-created, 'servicescapes' which is the design and the ambience of the hotel reception, and 'reception services'.

Further, a Post Hoc (Tukey HSD) test was conducted to ascertain the actual differences among the groups if any. The results are presented with superscripts, where 'mean' of guest expectation and experiences with the same superscript indicate significant differences among them (see Appendix G1 – G14). The guests' expectation results are presented first followed by their experiences.

6.5.1 Association of demographic and travel characteristics with guest pre-arrival expectations

The hotel guest demographic and travel characteristics have some level of association with guest pre-arrival expectations of hotel reception experience. The findings are presented in the sections below.

6.5.1.1 Association of gender and age with guest pre-arrival expectations

In terms of socio-demographic characteristics, there are no clear patterns. Age had no significant impact on expectation, except communication appears to be important to the younger guest, who expected to be talked to clearly in a language they understand. Nationality generally has some association with expectation; for example, international guests were more interested in having an interaction with the staff to possibly familiarize themselves with the culture of the host (see, Table 6.15, Table 6.16, Appendix G1 and Appendix G2).

Table 6.15 Association of age on guest pre-arrival expectations: One-Way ANOVA Results

Expectation items	Mean \pm SD			Sig. F-value, p-value;	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	18—39yrs	40-59yrs	60yrs and above		
Guest's face-to-face interaction expectation					
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.35 \pm .69 ^a	6.17 \pm .77 ^a	6.2 \pm 1.03	F=2.64; P=.05*	0.24
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.29 \pm .75 ^a	6.08 \pm .85 ^a	5.9 \pm .87	F=3.79; P=.02*	0.14

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

Table 6.16 Association of nationality on guest pre-arrival expectations: One-Way ANOVA Results

Expectation items	Mean ± SD			Sig. F-value, p-value;	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Ghanaians	Africans	Internationals		
Guest's face-to-face interaction expectation					
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.32±.74	6.39±.70 ^a	6.18±.70 ^a	F ₂ =2.90 P=.05*	.03
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.25±.79 ^a	6.31±.76 ^a	6.09±.83	F=2.92; P=.05*	0.1
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	6.13±1.01	6.02±1.21 ^a	6.29±.90 ^a	F=2.34; P=.05*	.02
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	5.94±1.11	5.75±1.30 ^a	6.17±.87 ^a	F=4.76; P=.009*	0.4
Servicescapes expectation					
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.75±1.04 ^a	5.85±.88 ^a	6.00±.82	F=2.05; P=.05*	.01

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

6.5.1.2 Association of education with guest pre-arrival expectations

There are a few areas where there seem to be some patterns in expectations, for example, education. People with lower educational qualification appeared to have higher expectations. For example, finding information on hotels and attractions (see Table 6.17, and Appendix G3).

Table 6.17 Association of the level of education with guest pre-arrival expectation: One-Way ANOVA Results

Expectation items	Mean ± SD			Sig. F-value, p-value;	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Less educated	Degree	Post graduate		
Guest's face-to-face expectation					
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	6.42±.76	6.14±.93	6.28±6.28	F=2.36; P=.05*	0.13
Reception service expectation					
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	6.09±.79 ^{ab}	5.65±1.05 ^a	5.59±1.01 ^b	F=4.1; P=.01*	0.71
Servicescapes expectation					
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	6.18±.85	6.11±.78 ^a	5.94±.75 ^a	F=2.45; P=.05*	0.14
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	6.09±.92 ^a	5.77±.92 ^a	5.87±.78	F=2.3; P=.05 *	0.14

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

6.5.1.3 Association of the purpose of travel with guest pre-arrival expectations

The findings from 6.18 below show that a hotel guest's purpose of travel is associated with certain expectations. For instance, both leisure and business guests expected their records to be accurate, and the receptionist to understand their special needs. Again leisure guests had higher expectations

for appealing décor and a relaxing ambience at the reception than guests who travelled for business (see Appendix G5).

Table 6.18 Association of the purpose of travel with guest pre-arrival expectations: Independent sample T-TEST Results

Experience items	Mean ± SD		Sig. T-value, P-value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Business	Leisure		
Guest's face-to-face interaction expectation				
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.2±0.7	6.1±0.8	T=1.1; P=0.2	
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	6.2±0.8	5.8±0.9	T=2.3; P=.021*	0.5
Reception service expectation				
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.3±0.8	6.1±0.9	T=2.5; P=.01*	0.4
Staff attributes expectation				
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.2±0.7	6.1±0.9	T=2.8; P=.005*	0.5
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.2±0.7	5.9±0.9	T=2.0; P=0.05*	0.4
Servicescapes expectation				
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	5.6±0.9	5.8±0.9	T=2.5; P=.01*	0.3
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	5.8±0.9	6.2±0.8	T=2.0; P=.05*	0.5

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$);

6.5.1.4 Association of travel experience with guest expectations

Guests' previous travel experience is associated with expectations; for example, experienced travellers generally have higher expectations than less experienced travellers. The experienced travellers are more likely to expect to meet a receptionist who is professional in appearance, speaks clearly to them, treats them with value, and shows an interest in their needs. Moreover, experienced travellers also were more likely to expect their booking records to be accurate, and information on features of the hotel at check-in was important to them (see Table 6.19 and Appendix G7).

Table 6.19 Association of the level of travel experience on guest pre-arrival expectations:
Independent sample T-TEST Results

Expectation Items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	1-5 times	6-10 times plus	
Guest's face-to-face interaction expectation			
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=2.0; T=.05*
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.3 \pm 0.7	6.0 \pm 1.0	T=3.6; P=.001*
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	5.0 \pm 1.8	4.3 \pm 1.9	T=2.2; P=.02*
Reception service expectation			
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.1 \pm 0.7	5.8 \pm 0.9	T=2.8; P=.005*
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.9 \pm 0.9	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=2.0; P=.05*
Staff attributes expectation			
The receptionist is professional in appearance	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=2.0; P=.05*
Servicescapes expectation			
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.5 \pm 0.7	T=2.5; P=.01*
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	6.1 \pm 0.8	5.8 \pm 0.9	T=2.2; P=.02*
Co-creation expectation			
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=2.0; T=.05*
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.3 \pm 0.7	6.0 \pm 1.0	T=3.6; P=.001*
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	5.0 \pm 1.8	4.3 \pm 1.9	T=2.2; P=.02*

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$);

6.5.1.1 Summary of guest expectation

The findings show that demographic characteristics have an association with guest expectation. These include nationality, age, educational qualification, the purpose of travel, and travel experience.

6.5.2 Association of demographic and travel characteristics with guests perception of the hotel reception experiences

The study again compared the guest's characteristics with how they rated the performance of the hotel after check-in, and the results highlighted some associations between demographic characteristics and perceived reception experience. However, age and travel experience did not have any role in guest reception experience (see Table 6.20 - Table 6.24).

6.5.2.1 Association of gender, and age with guest perception of hotel reception experiences

Gender had some association with reception experience; for example, hotel information and comfortable reception were important to both male and female guests. However, it was significantly more important to males. Regarding age, for example, younger guests rated their experience of

friendliness and courtesy of receptionists more highly while the older guests rated an escort to their room highly in judging performance (see Table 6.20, Table 6.21, Appendix G7 and Appendix G8).

Table 6.20 Association of gender with guest perception of hotel reception experiences: Independent sample T-TEST results

Experience items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Male	Female		
Guest's face-to-face interaction experience				
I was escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=2.0; P=.05*	0.2
Reception service experience				
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.8 \pm 0.9	5.5 \pm 1.0	T=2.0; P=.05*	0.3
Staff attributes experience				
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.2 \pm 0.6	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.1; P=.05*	0.1
Servicescapes experience				
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	6.0 \pm 0.8	5.7 \pm 1.1	T=2.1; P=.3*	0.3
Co-creation experience	6.2 \pm 0.9	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=0.7; P=0.4	
I was escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=2.0; P=.05*	0.2

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$)

Table 6.21 Association of level of age with guest perception of hotel reception experiences: One-Way ANOVA results

Experience items	Mean \pm SD			Sig. F-value, p-value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	18—39yrs	40-59yrs	60yrs and above		
Guest's face-to-face interaction experience					
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check- in	6.18 \pm .89	6.22 \pm .79 ^a	5.6 \pm 1.26 ^a	F= 2.46; P=.05*	0.1
Reception service experience					
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.37 \pm .71 ^a	6.17 \pm .87 ^a	6.10 \pm .87	F=3.07; P=.04*	0.25
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.81 \pm .99 ^a	5.88 \pm .86 ^b	5.1 \pm 1.10 ^{ab}	F=3.26; P= .03*	a=0.7; b=0.8
Staff attributes experience					
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.13 \pm .86 ^a	5.94 \pm .99 ^a	5.60 \pm .84	F=3.04; P=.04*	0.2
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.37 \pm .74 ^a	6.21 \pm .80 ^a	5.9 \pm 1.19	F=3.25; P=.04*	0.2
Servicescapes experience					
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.22 \pm .79 ^a	5.98 \pm .77 ^a	6.10 \pm .78	F=3.91; P=.02*	0.4

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

6.5.2.2 Association of Nationality with guest perception of hotel reception experiences

Nationality had some association with guest reception experience, where all groups of nationalities were satisfied with these elements. Domestic Africans were significantly more satisfied, however. All age groups were satisfied with the features of the hotel at check-ins. They were comfortable with the temperature and the relaxing ambience of the reception. They were also satisfied with the communication, language, voice tone, vocabulary and fluency of speech during the interaction with the receptionist (Table 6.22 and Appendix G9).

Table 6.22 The association of level of nationality on guests' perception of hotel reception experiences: One-Way ANOVA results

Experience items	Mean \pm SD			Sig. F-value, p-value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Ghanaians	Africans	Internationals		
Guest's face-to-face interaction experience					
The receptionist communicated clearly to me	6.32 \pm .74	6.39 \pm .70 ^a	6.18 \pm .76 ^a	F=2.8; P=.05*	.01
The receptionist spoke to me in a language I understood	6.25 \pm .79 ^a	6.31 \pm .76 ^a	6.09 \pm .83	F=2.91; P=.05*	0.1
Reception service experience					
I was able to find out the features of the hotel at check-in	5.51 \pm 1.11 ^a	5.93 \pm .91 ^a	5.76 \pm .95	F=3.95; P=.02	0.4
Servicescapes experience					
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.78 \pm .92 ^a	6.10 \pm .77 ^{ab}	5.76 \pm .86 ^b	F=.48; P=.007*	aa=0.4; ab=0.4
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area made me feel relaxed	6.09 \pm .80 ^a	6.10 \pm .83 ^a	5.89 \pm .90	F=2.55; P=.05*	.01

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

6.5.2.3 Association of Education on guests' perception of hotel reception experiences

Education has an association with perception, where highly educated guests rated highly the fact that the receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination. In contrast, less educated guests rated highly the design of the reception area looking like the culture, and the reception looking attractive (Table 6.23 and Appendix G10).

Table 6.23 Association of the level of education with guests' perception of hotel experiences: One-Way ANOVA results

Experience items	Mean \pm SD			Sig. F-value, p-value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Others	Degree	Postgraduate		
Staff attributes experience					
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	4.88 \pm 1.63	4.46 \pm 1.99 ^a	5.02 \pm 1.72 ^a	F=3.76; P=.02*	0.3
Servicescapes experience					
The reception area looked attractive as I approach	6.74 \pm 1.02 ^{ab}	6.06 \pm .81 ^a	6.08 \pm .816 ^b	F=2.9; P=.05*	aa=0.3, ab=0.4
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	5.17 \pm 1.48 ^b	4.50 \pm 2.1 ^{ab}	5.30 \pm 1.62 ^a	F=1.73; P=.001*	aa=0.4, ab=0.8
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.69 \pm 1.12 ^a	5.82 \pm .99	6.03 \pm .69 ^a	F=3.29; P=.03*	0.4
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate	5.62 \pm 1.25	5.56 \pm 1.12 ^a	5.84 \pm .88 ^a	F=3.0; P=.05*	0.3

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

6.5.2.3 Association of Purpose of travel with guest perception of hotel reception experiences

Business guests were particularly interested in meeting a friendly receptionist who was interested in their needs at check-in (Table 6.24 and Appendix G12).

Table 6.24 Association of the purpose of travel with guests' perception of hotel reception experiences: Independent sample T-TEST results

Experience items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Business	Leisure		
Guest's face-to-face interaction experience				
The Receptionist seemed to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.0 \pm 0.7	5.7 \pm 1.1	T=2.1; P=0.04*	0.3
Staff attributes experience				
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous	6.3 \pm 0.6	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.0; P=0.05*	0.2

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

6.5.2.1 Summary of the guest experience

The hotel guests' demographic and travel characteristics had some association with their pre-arrival expectation and hotel reception experience in Ghana. It is not surprising that in Chapter Five, the hotel receptionist reported grouping their guests into various characteristics and tailoring the experiences to suit their guests. The study sought to find how hotel characteristics impact on hotel reception experiences, which are discussed next.

6.6 Association of hotel characteristics with guest expectations and perception of hotel reception experiences

The aim of this section is to answer research question four of the study:

What impact do hotel characteristics have on expectations and experiences of hotel reception?

An Independent-sample T-test was conducted on hotel characteristics to measure their statistical significance on hotel reception expectation, and experience (See Appendix H). The hotel characteristics are international and domestic brands, and star rating (3, 4, and 5-star hotels). For T-test purposes, hotel characteristics functioned as independent variables (IVs), whereas the list of expectation and performance variables functioned as dependent variables (DVs). The findings are presented with expectation first, followed by experience. The hotel categories were three in total. Data from 4-star and 5-star hotels were merged for data analysis and reporting purposes.

6.6.1 The association of hotel characteristics with guest expectations

The results suggest that the hotels that guests stay in have an impact on their experiences. The hotels can be domestic, international, or a star rated. This section discusses the findings.

6.6.1.1 Association of hotel characteristics with guest expectations: Domestic hotels versus international hotels

The findings, as presented in Table 6.24, found that guests from both international and domestic hotels expect to meet staff who had some level of reception skills, good attitudes, and ethics. They expected the staff to be pleasant, professional, well trained, have command over the English language and able to speak clearly to guests. Guests also expected staff to have good customer relations, be understanding, serviceable, respectful, smart, and deliver the check-in service without delay (Table 6.25 and Appendix G13).

Table 6.25 Association of hotel brand (international versus domestic hotels) on guest pre-arrival expectations: Independent sample T-TEST result

Expectation item	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	Domestic hotel	International hotel	
Guest's face-to-face interaction expectation			
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=2.2; P=0.03*
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	5.9 \pm 0.9	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=3.9; P=0.001*
Staff attributes expectation			
The receptionist is professional in appearance	5.9 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=2.0; P=0.05*
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	5.6 \pm 1.0	4.7 \pm 1.5	T=6.7; P=0.001*
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=3.5; P=0.001*
Servicescapes expectation			
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.7 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 1.1	T=2.6; P=0.009*
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	5.9 \pm 0.75	6.2 \pm 0.79	T=3.5; P=0.001*
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	5.6 \pm 1.1	4.6 \pm 1.5	T=7.5; P=0.001*
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	5.9 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.1; P=0.03*

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$)

There were differences in the expectations of a cultural touch to the experience. These differences were between guests who stayed in domestic hotels and those who stayed in international hotels. It is evident from the results that the expectation of participants about locally owned/managed hotels was 'culture,' where both domestic guests expected the culture of the destination to be reflected in the hotel. A guest from a four-star domestic hotel indicated:

"As a lover of beauty and a proud African, I always yearn to see a touch of one's culture and style in the hotel setting, wherever it may be" (G169).

Guests in domestic hotels expected the receptionist to be dressed in local/traditional attire, and the front office designed to reflect the culture of the destination.

It is interesting that a minority of guests who stayed at international hotels still expected a touch of the culture of the destination at the front desk. They expected a hotel to incorporate a 'local design' into the 'foreign design.' For example, one four-star international hotel had Ghanaian Traditional symbols with their names translated into English at the reception. The comments expressed by participants also show that some guests expected the receptionist in the international hotel to have a local uniform. A guest from a four-star international hotel indicated;

"I was expecting the receptionist to be smartly dressed in African attire to depict the culture of the destination" (G487).

The findings show that the majority of guests who stayed in international hotels expected to meet a receptionist with professional attributes. These expectations are receptionists who were professional in appearance, friendly, courteous, and who would acknowledge and welcome them and conduct check-in promptly. Guests from international hotels also expected the front office to be attractive, easy to find, and with a good ambience. This perception of guests was comments made in the open-ended questions where International branded hotels, were preferred by a minority of guests. According to the guests, an international branded hotel is generally expected to provide services according to international standards. They are expected to be designed to reflect the international hotel chain, and they expect the services to be the same as what they experience in similar hotels across the world. Even if it is in a developing country, guests expect the same level of check-in service. A guest from a four-star domestic hotel remarked;

“I believe an international branded hotel will not have many different services even if it is in a developing country or elsewhere than where it made its name” (G301).

6.6.1.2 The association of hotel characteristics with guest expectations: Star rating

Star rating of the hotel has an impact on the guest expectation of hotel reception, where guests from higher star-rated hotels have higher expectations. For example, guests from four-star and five-star hotels expect fast check-ins, well-furnished front desk with a cultural touch, a knowledgeable receptionist whose appearance looks like the culture, and an escort to their rooms (see Table 6.26 and Appendix G 14).

Table 6.26 The association of hotel star-rating with guest pre-arrival expectations: Independent sample T-TEST result

Expectation items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	3 star hotel	4-star & 5-star hotel	
Reception service			
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.3 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=0.3; P=0.7
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.7 \pm 1.0	5.7 \pm 1.1	T=0.2; P=0.8
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.7 \pm 1.0	5.8 \pm 1.0	T=1.7; P=0.08
The check-in is prompt and efficient	6.2 \pm 0.9	6.4 \pm 0.8	T=2.5; P=0.01*
Staff attributes			
The receptionist is professional in appearance	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 1.0	T=0.7; P=0.4
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	5.0 \pm 1.4	5.4 \pm 1.3	T=2.9; P=0.005*
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=1.2; P=0.2
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.3 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=1.7; P=0.09
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.0 \pm 0.9	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=2.9; P=0.003*
Servicescapes			
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	6.0 \pm 0.9	5.7 \pm 1.3	T=2.1; P=0.03*
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.7	T=2.5; P=0.01*
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	5.0 \pm 1.5	5.3 \pm 1.3	T=2.8; P=0.005*
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=0.2; P=0.8
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.8	T=0.8; P=0.4
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.8 \pm 0.9	5.9 \pm 0.9	T=0.8; P=0.4
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	5.6 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 1.0	T=2.0; P=0.04*
The ambiance of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=0.6; P=0.6
Co-creation			
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=1.4; P=0.1
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	6.1 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=0.8; P=0.4
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.1 \pm 0.7	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=0.2; P=0.8
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=1.3; P=1.8
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=0.1; P=0.9
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	5.8 \pm 0.9	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=4.6; P=0.000*
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.1 \pm 1.0	6.5 \pm 0.7	T=4.2; P=0.000*
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	5.8 \pm 1.9	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.7; P=0.007

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$)

6.6.1. 1 Summary of expectation

An interesting observation in this study is that the expectation of service of guests in domestic hotels and international hotels differs. This difference is most evident in the qualitative responses from guest surveys. The study reveals that guests who stay at locally owned or managed hotels had an added expectation of a cultural element in the reception experience. In terms of star rating guests from higher star-rated hotels had a higher expectation of the reception.

6.6.2 Association of hotel characteristics with guests' perception of hotel reception experiences

The study also reports the impact of hotel characteristic (domestic/international and star rating) on the performance of the hotels after check-ins.

6.6.2.1 Association of hotel characteristics with guest' perception of hotel reception experiences: Domestic hotels versus international hotels

The data suggest that guests from international hotels and domestic hotels were satisfied with their reception experiences. But guests at international hotels were significantly more likely to rate their experiences higher than did guests at domestic hotels. They arrived at a neat, tidy, and comfortable front desk, their reservation records were accurate, they had information on attractions in Accra, and their check-in was fast. The receptionists at the international hotels were professional in appearance, knowledgeable, communicated clearly in a known language to the guest, and enough time was spent on their needs (see Table 6.27 and Appendix G15).

Table 6.27 The association of hotel characteristics (international versus. domestic hotels) with guest perception of hotel reception experiences: Independent sample T-TEST result

Experience items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	Domestic hotel	International hotel	
Reception service			
The hotel's records of my booking was accurate	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.4 \pm 0.7	T=3.1; P=0.002*
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.8 \pm 0.9	5.5 \pm 1.0	T=2.9; P=0.004*
The check-in was prompt and efficient	6.0 \pm 1.0	6.4 \pm 0.9	T=3.6; P=0.001)*
Staff attributes			
The Receptionist was professional in appearance	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=2.2; P=0.02*
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	5.7 \pm 1.2	3.5 \pm 1.7	T=13.6; P=0.001*
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.1 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=2.0; P=0.05*
Servicescapes			
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	6.1 \pm 0.9	3.5 \pm 1.7	T=17.0; P=0.001*
The reception area was neat and tidy	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=2.5; P=0.01*
The décor of the reception was visually appealing	6.0 \pm 0.9	5.9 \pm 0.8	T=2.0; P=0.04*
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.7 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 0.7	T=2.5; P=0.01*
Guest face-to-face interaction			
The receptionist communicated clearly to me	6.2 \pm 0.6	6.4 \pm 0.7	T=2.1; P=0.03*
The receptionist spoke to me in a language I understood	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.4 \pm 0.7	T=2.0; P=0.05*
The receptionist spent an appropriate amount of time on my needs	5.8 \pm 1.0	6.1 \pm 1.0	T=3.0; P=0.003
I was treated as a valued guest	6.0 \pm 1.0	6.3 \pm 0.9	T=2.1;P=0.03*

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$)

In the opinion of the guests, international hotels are of high class, and they delivered quality services. According to the guests, they felt warmly welcomed on arrival, had a prompt check-in, and some received personalized services. The findings suggest that guests at international hotels were satisfied with their service, and they described the experience as ‘brilliant, exceptional, excellent, producing a feeling of satisfaction and memorable.’ As remarked by a participant from a three-star international hotel:

The check-in process was very fast, with accurate records of my booking; the staff were quite professional (G93).

The findings also indicate that guests from both domestic and international hotels were satisfied with the performance of staff. Guests commented that the staff were pleasant, caring, and professional; they paid attention to their special needs and spoke clearly to guests. Below are comments from two participants, the first guest stayed at the five-star domestic hotel, and the second guest stayed at the three-star international hotel:

*“The aura of friendliness that surrounds the hotel staff, it is welcoming” (G359).
“Professional and welcoming staff, clean front desk, I will surely recommend this hotel to others’ (G180)”.*

Guests from domestic hotels had their expectation of ‘culture’ met. The ‘Afropolitan’ Experience’ which is offered by some of the locally branded hotels is a term used to describe a hotel which is ‘fully African branded’ but with a high level of service to meet international standards.’ Most guests who stayed in the domestic hotels expected an Afropolitan experience. Guests who stayed at a three-star domestic hotel said:

“As an Architect who works in most international countries, I love to appreciate the local designs and artefacts of local hotels coupled with a touch of the local hospitality yet the international standard of service (G420).

As hotels can serve as attractions, it was not surprising that guests who travel to do business and could not have the opportunity to travel around can have a feeling of the culture of the destination in the reception experience. As remarked by a guest who stayed at a five-star domestic hotel:

“That is the only time and place I may get to see a bit of the culture of the place, especially when I am not able to visit their tourist sites” (G439).

The uniqueness of the experience starts with the hotel's name, which is usually in the local language but easy to pronounce. A large majority of the guests were of the view that the local hotel brands provide a ‘local hospitality experience,’ as remarked by a participant who stayed at a domestic three-star hotel.

“Local branded hotels are the best if you wish to explore local hotel hospitality like I always do. This hotel offers remarkable African hospitality coupled with lovely local décor (G211).

One obvious theme expressed about the experience of domestic hotels was the display of the destination’s artefacts at the front desk. These artefacts carry messages and meanings about the destination, its history, values, and unique identity. The design was particularly spectacular for both local and international guests who stayed at domestic hotels. As one of the guests who checked into a three-star domestic hotel remarked:

“My experience with African branded hotels is super. I like the African artefacts that have been used to decorate the reception and the lobby’ (G215)

A minority of guests also believed the servicescape of the locally branded hotels provides a local storytelling experience. A guest who stayed at a three-star domestic hotel described the experience:

“Locally branded hotels tell a story. A story of the indigenes. And I think that is beautiful” (G283).

Some guests perceive domestic branded hotels as offering quality and a higher standard of services at a competitive price than international branded hotels. One guest from a four-star (domestic hotel) who said they would choose a domestic hotel over an international hotel indicated:

“I think some local branded hotel provides high standard services at affordable prices as compared to the ‘international branded’ hotel (G184).

A few of the guests were also of the view that international branded hotels are run according to international standards and are more expensive regarding rates charged for their services.

6.6.2.2 The association of hotel characteristics with guest perception of hotel reception experiences: Star rating

Star rating had the most significant impact on the reception experiences; the guest who stayed at 4-star and 5-star hotels arrived at a visually appealing, comfortable, well furnished, relaxing ambient front office designed with a cultural theme. They were acknowledged and welcomed by a friendly and courteous receptionist who dressed in ‘African attire.’ The guest’s booking records were accurate, and they were escorted to their room by staff after check-in (see Table 6.28, Appendix G16, and Appendix H1).

Table 6.28 The association of hotel star rating with the guest perception of hotel reception:
Independent sample T-TEST

Experience items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	3-star hotel	4-star & 5-star hotel	
Reception service experience			
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.6 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 1.0	T=2.2; P=0.02*
The check-in was prompt and efficient	6.3 \pm 1.0	6.1 \pm 1.2	T=1.9; P=0.04*
Staff attributes experience			
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	4.3 \pm 1.9	5.4 \pm 1.5	T=5.7; P=0.001*
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous	6.2 \pm 0.9	6.4 \pm 0.7	T=2.7; P=0.007*
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=2.1; P=0.03*
Servicescapes experience			
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	6.0 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 0.9	T=3.0; P=0.003*
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	4.3 \pm 2.1	5.8 \pm 1.1	T=8.0; P=0.0001*
The décor of the reception was visually appealing	6.0 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.1; P=0.04*
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate	5.5 \pm 1.0	6.0 \pm 1.1	T=3.4; P=0.001*
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area made me feel relaxed	5.8 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.5; P=0.01*
Guest face-to-face interaction experience			
I was given a welcome at the reception	6.2 \pm 0.9	6.4 \pm 0.8	T=2.0; P=0.04*
I was escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	6.1 \pm 0.9	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=2.4; P=0.01*

* denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$)

6.2.2.1 Summary of guests experience

Guest from domestic hotels experienced a cultural touch to the reception encounter. By this cultural touch to the experience guests from Ghana and other African countries felt at home in the setting and international guests experienced the culture of the destination. Domestic hotels in this study were more likely to display these cultural elements, although guests staying at international hotels also reported appreciating cultural elements.

6.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, findings have been presented that portrayed guest profiles and expectations and perceptions of hotel reception experiences in the hotels in Accra, Ghana. The results show that guest pre-arrival expectations and arrival experience are influenced by human interactions and the cultural servicescapes of the reception. Human interactions took the form of guests having warm face-to-face interactions with staff at check-in. Guests stressed that the human element to the service experience

made a significant and positive difference to the reception experience; an observation supported by both guest quantitative and qualitative responses. The interaction between the guests and staff took place within the servicescapes.

The servicescapes of the hotel were important to the reception experience. The findings in this study also showed that the expectation of service of guests in domestic hotels and international hotels differs. This difference is most evident in the qualitative responses from guest surveys. The study revealed that guests who stayed at domestic hotels had added expectations of a cultural element in the reception experience which was met by the hotels. However, guests who stayed in International hotels were divided in their expectations.

Overall, guest pre-arrival expectations matched their experience, given guests were either not expecting such a high standard of service or were previous guests to the hotel (the sample had a high number of returning guests). This chapter reported the findings of guest perception of the hotel reception experience, while the subsequent chapter is devoted to presenting a discussion of the reception experience from the perspective of all stakeholders (guests, managers and staff).

Chapter 7

Discussion: Hotel reception experience in a developing county context of Ghana

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the main findings of this study. These findings are discussed in the light of the theoretical foundations which underpinned the study: co-creation, servicescapes and the experience economy as they are involved in creating hotel experiences within a developing nation context. Apart from this study being the first to combine these three theories to explore hotel reception experiences, it is also one of only a few studies that focus on reception experiences of guests and stakeholders from a developing nation perspective from Ghana. The chapter begins with a summary of the main findings of the study, then presents a detailed and theoretically informed discussion of the key findings.

The aim of this study was to explore the hotel reception experience—and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in this experience—within a developing economy's (Ghana) context. To achieve this aim, four research questions were identified;

1. a) What are the key elements of the hotel reception experience?

b) In what ways does the developing country context impact these elements?
2. What are the expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience by different stakeholders (guests, staff, and managers)?
3. How do the different characteristics of key stakeholders influence their expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience (for example, culture, age, gender, and previous travel experience)?
4. What impact do hotel characteristics have on expectations and experiences of the hotel reception?

The tourism literature widely recognises the importance of tourism to developing countries and the role of hotels in the tourism and hospitality industry, with hotel guests becoming more discerning, demanding, diverse, and hedonistic over time (Erdly & Kesterson-Townes 2003; Van Boven & Gilovich 2003). Globally, the hospitality industry has moved from an era of physical product/service-focused

business to an experience-focused one (Knutson, et al. 2007), with leisure and hospitality businesses providing their guest with customised travel and hospitality experiences. With the changing trends in the hospitality industry, hotels are now directing their efforts towards creating holistic experiential service events that connect individually with guests on an emotional and personal level to create a memorable experience (Bharwani & Jauhari 2013a). These experiences are, however, co-created with frontline staff who are a key resource of the hotel (Lusch, et al. 2007), where memorable experiences are created and consumed by the parties involved (Bharwani & Jauhari 2013).

The findings of this study were presented in detail in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. To facilitate the discussion in this chapter, the main findings of the study are presented below using themes as a guide. This study explored three key aspects of the hotel reception experiences: experiential services (experience economy), co-creation of the reception experience, and servicescapes (the front office setting) experience. The cultural context of the destination, Ghana, plays a prominent role in these key elements.

Experiential services

The site of this study was the hotel reception, which Pine and Gilmore (1999) suggested to be part of the experience economy. In the hotel, memorable experiences are co-created with guests. The hotel reception experience in Ghana is staged, which produces outcomes for the guests, receptionists and the hotel.

The findings presented in this study suggest that the receptionists and managers perceive culture to play a critical role in hotel reception experiences in Ghana. Managers and staff of domestic hotels used the term *Afropolitan experience* to describe the hotel reception experience in Ghana. According to them, *Afropolitan is from the word 'Afro' (Africa) and Cosmopolitan, and it means local hospitality experience combined with international standards.*

This study found that four main factors are important to guests, receptionists and managers, which together form their pre-arrival expectations and experiences. These are human interactions; staff attributes; hotel reception service; and the servicescape experience, all of which are related to the theories that provided the conceptual foundations for the study (i.e., experience economy, co-creation and servicescape) (see section 7.3).

Servicescapes experience

The front office setting of the hotel was key to the kind of atmosphere the hotel aimed at portraying. Elements that were used to create such an atmosphere include themes, artefacts, temperature, signs, symbols, music, and the dress code of receptionists. While the front office servicescape is in this way vital to generating atmosphere via its elements, the precise way in which this was achieved varied between different types of hotels. The two main categories of the hotels used for this study were domestic branded hotels and international branded hotels. International hotels in Ghana were hotels which were either owned by foreigners or were part of a franchise, while the domestic branded hotels were locally owned and managed.

The expectations guests had of experiences in domestic hotels and international hotels differed. Guests who stayed at domestic hotels had an added expectation of a cultural element in the reception experience, whereby domestic guests from Ghana and other African countries felt 'at home' in the setting, and international guests experienced the culture of the destination. This cultural element often commences with the hotel's name, which is usually in the local language but easy to pronounce. In general, cultural elements were expected primarily in the servicescape elements of the hotel, including cultural artefacts located in the reception area. These artefacts carry messages and meanings about the destination, its history, values, and unique identity. Domestic hotels in this study were more likely to display these cultural elements, although guests staying at international hotels also reported appreciating cultural elements.

By contrast, the front office of international hotels was designed to reflect the international hotel chains or franchise (such as Accor, or Inter-Continental Hotels Group) to align with the worldwide standards for each brand.

The servicescapes of the hotels are the service environment where reception experiences are co-created. The next section provides the findings of the co-creation of reception experiences.

Co-creation experience

This study found co-creation of the front office service to be key to reception experiences. The co-creation of the experience takes the form of guests having warm face-to-face interactions with staff. Receptionists, managers and guests stressed that the human element to the service experience makes a difference to the reception experience. Hotel reception experiences are co-created between the guest and the receptionist within the setting of the front office and the broader cultural context of the destination, Ghana.

Guests, receptionists and managers highlighted the importance of staff characteristics to the experience. Staff characteristics such as friendliness, courtesy, politeness, welcoming, professionalism, presentable appearance and the ability to understand guests' special requirements are essential in creating experiences.

The findings of this study also indicate that the receptionists put in considerable effort to co-construct successful hospitality experiences with the guests. However, the face-to-face contact of the receptionists with guests created cross-cultural challenges, such as language barriers between receptionists and international guests, abuse by the guests they serve, and socio-economic inequality between guest and receptionists (see Chapter Eight for a detailed discussion and interpretation of these latter findings).

As indicated, the hotel reception experience in Ghana is imparted by the experience economy, co-creation of the reception experience, and servicescapes experience. The following subsections (7.2 – 7.4) explore important issues about hotel reception experiences that emerged from the analysis of surveys and interviews with participants.

7.2 Experience Economy in hotel reception experiences

This study assumes that hotel reception experience in Ghana is part of the experience economy. The experience economy leads to an overall shift towards guest experiences (Gilmore & Pine 2002; Johnston 1999; Tosti 2009). In relating the concept of experience to hotels, Pine and Gilmore (1999) refer to hotels as the '*experience stager*' which no longer offer only goods or services but also experiences, rich with sensations, co-created within each customer, and between the customer and service personnel; experiences being inherently personal. Customer experience is context-specific and, in this study, hotels provide a platform for guest interaction, which generates emotions and imparts guests' experiences (Knutson & Beck 2004; Lemke, et al. 2006; MacMillan & McGrath 1997). Guests' reception experiences include their memorable encounters with the hotel; this consists of all activities and processes from making a reservation through to arrival and the actual stay, until billing and check-out (Knutson & Beck 2004). This study focused on the face-to-face encounters at the front desk.

The reception experience has inherent intangibility, which requires receptionists to co-create the service experience. In effect, it means that the actions of those responsible for that delivery become the 'product'. The way the receptionists are involved in co-creating the service is critical to the guests' overall satisfaction (Dawson, et al. 2011). The inseparability or simultaneous production and consumption of the reception experience requires the staff and the guest to be present at the same

time. They bring the expectations, past experiences, motivations and their understanding of the situation to co-create the experience. The implication here is that human interaction and staff attributes (see section 7.1) are critical to the experience which is discussed in detail in section 7.4. The co-creation of the experience takes place within the physical environment, the servicescapes (see section 7.3.2 for a detailed discussion).

The findings presented in this study suggest that the receptionists and managers of domestic hotels perceive culture to play a key role in hotel reception experiences in Ghana. Managers and staff of the domestic hotel used the term '*Afropolitan experience*' to describe the hotel reception experience in Ghana. They explained that this incorporated a blend of local hospitality with international standards. The *Afropolitan* experience could be described as glocalisation (from the combination of the word globalisation and localisation), which means the practice of conducting business according to both local and global considerations (Roudometof 2016). An example of glocalisation is multinational companies adapting their business strategy to the local culture. Businesses which engage in glocalisation can connect with the consumers of that region on an emotional level and also leverage their global position (Presutti, Holt, & Camillo 2015).

However, managers and staff of international hotels indicated they provided experiences according to the international standards of their brands. The brand standard informs their level of services and interactions. For example, hotels within the Accor group greet their guests in the French language. Managers and staff, as part of their training, are sometimes sponsored overseas to be trained on the practices of their brand. The reason is international hotels "typically run based on home headquarters' management principles under a franchising contract" (Yoon & Lee 2017, p. 17). These management principles make it a challenge to adapt local hospitality experiences to their international brand standards (Yoon & Lee 2017).

There were contradictory perceptions about the international hotel experiences from guests. While some guests from international hotels believed the hotels are reliable and will deliver quality services according to a global standard (Huang & Cai 2015). Other guests had expectations of experiencing local hospitality in the international hotels. Given international hotels cater for guests from diverse cultures, Huang and Cai (2015) suggested a need for international hotel companies to understand cultures and values that are important to the locals.

The study used three levels of the overall rating (that was built into the data collection) of experiences by guests, which are; below expectation, same as expected, and above expectation. A substantial majority of guests judged the reception experience as either as expected or better than expected

while a few rated the overall experience as below expectation. This finding implies that to a reasonable extent hotels are able to satisfy guest needs at the reception. In the hotel industry, understanding guest needs and exceeding expectations are essential for competitive service businesses. More specifically, the hotel image and customer satisfaction with the service encounter are important to guests' intention to repurchase, to recommend, and to exhibit loyalty (Kandampully & Suhartanto 2000). To the guest, experiences that are both satisfying and successful are the ones that the guest will recreate in the future and promote through word-of-mouth, which is what the hotel wants to gain more business (Harkison 2017; Pine & Gilmore 1999; Sthapit, et al. 2020). However, if the experience falls short of expectations, it can potentially lead to guests sharing negative information to potential guests (Harkison 2017; Luo & Qu 2016). Guests' pre-arrival expectations matching their experience could also suggest that they were either not expecting such a high standard of service or were previous guests to the hotel (the sample had a high number of previous guests).

As indicated, the hotel reception experience in Ghana is co-created within the servicescapes. The subsequent sections, 7.3 and 7.4 discuss the servicescapes and co-creation of the reception experiences.

7.3 The hotel reception servicescapes experience in Ghana

The results of this study show that the physical surroundings, known as the servicescape, of the front office, is important to the reception experience. Servicescapes include the front office aesthetics, layout accessibility, cleanliness, electronic equipment display, furniture ambience, and music. The servicescape influences the guest's senses, and impact their experiences (Bitner 1990; Rosenbaum 2005). The physical surrounding is important because the reception experience is co-created within the servicescapes, which are experienced by both the guests and the staff of the hotel in general (Ariffin & Aziz 2012; Ariffin, et al. 2013; Bitner 1992; Worsfold, et al. 2016b). This study found two types of front office servicescapes: local themed front office design and international-themed front office design.

7.3.1 1 Local themed front office servicescapes versus international-themed front office servicescapes

The servicescape at the front office is the first point of the guest interaction on arrival at the hotel, where initial impressions are formed (Muralidhar, et al. 2016). This study confirmed that the service setting (the physical environment) of the reception and the meanings that such environments evoke is important to guests (Ariffin & Aziz 2012; Worsfold, Fisher, McPhail, Francis, & Thomas 2016). For example, guests, receptionists and managers all commented about the importance of the cultural

aspects of the environment for the experience. A major finding of this study has been the role that culture can play in these encounters (especially in the developing country context). Further, the role of culture is complex and includes the culture of the hosts, the guests and the wider destination setting.

In this context, 'culture' is apparent in the form of 'cultural servicescapes' and the local artefact and symbols on display in the reception area. This substantiates previous findings in the literature conducted by Patterson and Mattila (2008) that the uniqueness of both the guests' and hosts' culture influence both the perceptions and expectations of experiences.

The managers were focused on designing their servicescapes to meet guests' expectations. The process through which hotels undertake activities before the arrival of guests, which are intended to create specific impressions, is referred to as backstage preparation, a process earlier theorised as impression management (Goffman 1959). The servicescape is one arena of this preparation. One of the key strategies managers used to impress their guests in the servicescapes of the front office was the incorporation of traditional cultural elements of Ghana (see Chapter Two, Context, section 2.2). Cultural elements within the servicescapes of the front desk were important to the guests in this study, as it formed part of the experiences (Walls (2013) as the quote below typifies:

"The reception is the only place I may get to see a bit of the culture of the place, especially when I am not able to visit their tourist sites" (G439)

Goffman (1959) suggested that impression management stems from the basic principles of influencing another person through self-monitoring and strategic presentation. To create positive impressions, individuals engage in various self-presentation strategies including, but not limited to, wearing specific clothing, reframing emotions (e.g., re-appraising anxiety as excitement) and the use of nonverbal cues (e.g., smiles). In addition to the use of cultural artefacts, all of these features were present in the servicescapes of the hotels in this study (Brooks 2014; Brooks, Dai, & Schweitzer 2014; Brooks, Gino, & Schweitzer 2015).

Effective impression management is of social importance because individuals who are able to create positive impressions gain admiration, status and confidence (Anderson, Hildreth, & Howland 2015; Anderson & Kilduff 2009; Magee & Galinsky 2008), and also project both warmth and competence (Bitterly & Schweitzer 2019). Bitterly and Schweitzer (2019), argue further that impressions form the basis for the ensuing relationships and interactions. It is therefore not surprising that managers in this study put in so much effort to create the kind of servicescape they think will be appealing to their

guest. The service atmosphere was created using ambience, prescribed dress codes, furniture, cultural artefacts and requiring receptionists to wear smiles to welcome the guests.

In a developing country context of Ghana, for example, given the crucial importance of 'culture' to guests experiences. This would place particular strategic importance on the design of servicescapes to an extent that is far greater than that in the hotels of developed countries.

The servicescapes of the hotels in this study could be regarded as the physical (visual) manifestation of the *Afropolitan* experience (see section 7.2). The number of hotel guests looking for more than a traditional hotel service is increasing (Landman 2009). Hotels offering unique concepts and personalised services experiences are popular. The concept of the servicescapes of the hotels in this study differentiates domestic hotels from internationals.

For hotels to stand out and be able to offer unique hotel experiences, servicescapes are one of the most crucial marketing tools. The servicescapes represent the physical facilities which are the visible manifestation of the intangible services that guests could rely on to make a judgment about the service experience the hotel is about to offer (Ishaq, Bhutta, Hamayun, Danish, & Hussain 2014). This study suggests that the servicescape is of significant importance in presenting the brand identity of hotels.

Hotels all aim at creating memorable guest experiences for repeat business:

A guest comes in and sees your uniform is not neat or torn or faded; it doesn't speak well of you the receptionist. The person cannot even have confidence in you, because you need to let the guest know that you are good for what you are doing, and he/she can trust that you will handle him/her well. So if you are not able to handle yourself well; your uniform is dirty, it is faded, things will go wrong (P25 R).

The study also found receptionists' appearance to be an important part of this reception experience, supplementing and supporting the servicescape. The uniforms of the international hotels' receptionists were designed to reflect the brand's international culture worldwide and to portray brand identity for their regular guests. Unlike their international counterparts, the domestic hotels wore only African or Ghanaian branded uniforms.

According to managers and staff, receptionists' physical appearance affects the perception of the customer (as indicated in the quote above (P25). Such perceptions are about his/her attributes, for example, competence, friendliness and credibility. Managers in this study consider the physical appearance of their prospective employees before employing them as frontline staff. They believe the dress code complements the physical appearance of receptionists. Managers and their receptionists

said that a well-groomed individual displays confidence, identity, smartness and professionalism; therefore, the choice of style and colour of dress code for receptionists is particularly important.

This finding is consistent with previous studies which state that the servicescapes are not only made up of the physical parts but also of communicative ones such as politeness, concern and 'culture delivery' (X. Zhao, Mattila, & Ngan 2014; X. Zhao & Mattila 2013). Similarly, Al Halbusi, Jimenez Estevez, Eleen, Ramayah, and Hossain Uzir (2020), found properties of the servicescape such as physical appearance and appropriate behaviour of staff to influence customers, which they termed 'social servicescapes'. Further, (Shostack 1977a) suggested servicescape encounters include all aspects of a customer's interaction with a service organisation, which includes its employees and its physical facilities ((Wakefield & Blodgett 1996).

Staff form part of the social dimension (environmental stimuli) of the servicescape; frontline staff may connect with a guest on a personal and emotional level (Fisk, et al. 2011; Zomerdiijk & Voss 2010). According to Söderlund and Julander (2009), and Shostack (1977), features and behaviours of the service staff are an essential source of information to the guest in forming a total impression about a service organisation since they represent something tangible. This consistent incorporation of the behaviours and social interactions of the staff with guests into the concept of the servicescape implies that such an 'extended' servicescape does not only provide the setting for the co-creation of the reception experience but is itself a part of that co-creation via the behaviours and appearance of staff.

There were other elements within the servicescapes of the hotels such as music, lighting levels, the blend of colour shades and temperature, which the managers and the receptionists felt enhanced reception experiences for their guests. This finding is in agreement with the work of Countryman and Jang (2006) who found that atmospheric elements (colour, lighting and styles) influence the overall impression of the hotel lobby. Music, lighting levels and temperatures are known as ambient conditions (Bitner 1992; Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). Ambient conditions represent those stimuli that can be identified by any of the five human senses (Rosenbaum & Massiah 2011). It could affect emotions, moods, cognition, atmosphere, spatial impression and influence human behaviour (Custers, et al. 2010; Farshchi & Fisher 2006; Russell & Snodgrass 1987).

One distinction between locally-branded and international hotels was the choice and selection of music. In the reception of international hotels, one will hear international music playing. These deliberate efforts to present every aspect of the servicescape, including the audio environment, as part of a consistent cultural theme reinforces the centrality of culture to the construction of the servicescape.'

7.3.2 The role of servicescapes in the hotel reception experiences in Ghana

The reception servicescape is a vital feature of the 'first impressions' of the overall hotel experience for guests. From a marketing point of view, the servicescapes play several roles in the hotel reception experiences.

The servicescapes serve as a 'package' for the hotels by portraying the overall image and indicating the kind of service experience the hotel offers. The packaging presents a particular identity which provokes the emotions of the customer. This package plays a significant role in forming expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience (Zeithaml & Bitner 1996).

The findings support previous findings that the servicescapes of the hotel determine service experience differentiation of the hotel. That is, through the servicescapes, the hotel can be presented as domestic branded. An example is an international chain of hotels with the same brand identity (design) globally. The physical environment creates service differentiation in signalling the intended segment of the market, positioning the firm and showing distinctiveness from competitors (Bitner 1992). More than half of the receptionists from the domestic branded hotels explained that their servicescapes were deliberate as they want their guest to have a distinctive Ghanaian and an African experience on arrival unique to them. Guests' perception of servicescapes helps them to differentiate and categorise hotels in terms of their expected experience quality (Chang 2016).

It should also be noted that the majority of the guests in this study were previous guests to the hotels (repeat guests). This is likely to mean that they were satisfied with their previous experience with the hotel (given servicescapes play a crucial role in the overall service experience). It cannot, however, be concluded that all previous guests were satisfied since they would include guests who have not returned. These findings substantiate previous findings of Ariffin, et al. (2013) that the servicescape has a positive impact on the patronage intentions of customers. When guests are satisfied with the servicescapes, it positively influences their behavioural responses and emotions (Avan, Uyar, Zorlu, & Özmen 2019; Lockwood & Pyun 2019; Park, Back, Bufquin, & Shapoval 2019). Further, guests' satisfaction can lead to word-of-mouth recommendations (Dedeoglu, Bilgihan, Ye, Buonincontri, & Okumus 2018; Y. Liu & Jang 2009).

The servicescapes of the front office not only play a role in guest reception experiences but also the experiences of the hotel staff. The servicescapes of the reception could influence the behaviour of both the receptionists and guests (Bitner 1992). According to managers, the servicescapes play a facilitating role in reception experiences. Servicescapes can either positively or negatively have an effect on receptionists or guests' ability to perform their respective activities in co-creating an

experience (Bitner 1992; Parish, et al. 2008). The reason is that the servicescape acts as a promoter to encourage and nurture specific forms of social interaction among and between receptionists and guests (Bitner 1992). Depending on the design settings, efficient or inefficient performance is facilitated. A well-designed service setting causes the service experience to be pleasant from both the guest and the receptionist's perspective, while an inefficient design may provoke frustration (Zeithaml & Bitner 1996). The servicescapes may influence staff motivation, satisfaction and productivity (Davis 1984). Staff from both domestic and international hotels were motivated by their servicescapes. For example, the servicescapes of the domestic hotel was a sense of pride to staff. When guests ask questions about the local designs of the reception gave them an opportunity to talk about the culture of Ghana. Staff also felt good about their uniforms which is a form of psychological branding to them.

The servicescapes of the front office are also critical to the experiences of the hotel staff. Bitner (1992) noted that the servicescapes of the reception influence the behaviour of receptionists. Managers said the servicescapes play a facilitating role in co-creating the reception experience. Servicescapes can either positively or negatively have an effect on receptionists or guests' ability to perform their respective activities in co-creating an experience (Bitner 1992; Parish, et al. 2008).

According to managers, the front office setting design was different from other departments in the hotel. There was adequate signage which serves as a form of communication to guests and staff. This way, the servicescapes are acting as a socialiser, which could influence receptionists' behaviour. The design of the servicescapes of the hotel could clarify the roles, behaviours and relationships of guests and receptionists. The design of the front office indicates in which parts of the servicescape staff only are permitted. For example, the back of the reception desk. In this regard, the servicescapes convey the role distinction between guest, staff and managers (Zeithaml & Bitner 1996).

Managers and receptionists put considerable thought and effort into the design and construction of servicescapes with the intention to impress guests and to create some level of assurance that the staff are competent to take care of their needs. Servicescapes of the front office influence guest perception, satisfaction and the overall experience of the guest (Poria, et al. 2011; Walls, et al. 2011; Walls 2013; Worsfold, et al. 2016). The reason is the servicescape is the service environment in which reception experiences take place (Dong & Siu 2013; Siu, et al. 2012) and are co-created and consumed. Crucially, given this role in co-creation, they also influence staff performance and future patronage decisions of guests. The next section discusses the process of co-creation of reception experiences.

7.4 Co-creation of the hotel reception experience in Ghana

Hospitality exists within the lived experience, and it is an experience that is co-created by the people who take part in it 'host' and 'guest'. O'Gorman, 2007 has described it as a gift that is given and shared. The hotel reception experience is co-created between the host and the guest through human interactions that is, the encounter between guests and staff are critical to the reception experience.

The stakeholders in these experiences are the guests, receptionists and managers. The stakeholders had different socio-cultural backgrounds which influence the co-creation of the reception experience. This section discusses the human interactions in reception experiences, local hospitality experience co-creation and the key persons who are involved in the co-creation of the experiences.

7.4.1 Receptionists' face-to-face interaction with guests in co-creating the reception experiences

This study has highlighted that the hotel reception experience can be understood as starting from the airport where a complimentary shuttle picks up guests and transports them to the hotel. The study found that human interactions that is, the encounter between guests and receptionists is critical to the overall reception experience. More generally, it has been argued that human interactions are important and influence guest experiences in the hospitality industry (Baek, et al 2020; Bharwani & Jauhari 2013).

Guests' memorable experiences in a hotel setting are co-created through the interactions between the guests themselves, and the staff they encounter at their chosen hotels (Baek, et al. 2020; Payne, et al. 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003). It is the formal responsibility of the hotel staff to ensure that their guests' needs are met. During interactions, verbal and nonverbal communication cues may produce diverse meanings and understandings for the parties involved (Goffman 2010).

As part of the role, reception staff have a responsibility to develop a mutual understanding with guests. Most of these cues can be interpreted differently by people from different cultural backgrounds but, in co-creation, there is a deliberate attempt by the staff to use all communication cues to produce a particular and shared understanding. In this study, the receptionists perceive they had a clear understanding of how communication (both verbal and nonverbal) impacts significantly on the co-created experiences.

Further, managers trained or encouraged staff to become multilingual, for example, speak French as well as other international languages. These managers and receptionists recognised that the role

communication plays in the co-creation process is invaluable and should not be taken for granted. Some of the guests who were satisfied with their co-created experiences expressed this by stating;

"I wasn't expecting this standard of service from a hotel in a developing country even though my friends were so confident in the services of hotel when they advised me to choose it". (G141)

"Professional and welcoming staff, clean front desk, I will surely recommend this hotel to others' (G180)".

Positive interaction at the reception was a pre-arrival expectation for an overwhelming majority of guests. A significant majority of the receptionists choose to be receptionists because they love human interactions. The receptionists also believed that Ghanaians are generally friendly and enjoy human interactions (Global Affairs Canada 2018; Kwintessential 2019) which suggests that the co-creation of the experience is shaped by the Ghanaian way of living and doing things.

Previous research has established that the overall guest experience is influenced by the guests' and staff's expectations for the encounters (Ariffin & Maghzi 2012). In this study, guests reported that they had specific expectations before arriving at the hotels, and they anticipated that the staff in the hotels would meet such expectations. Similarly, the receptionists reported that they classified guests using various categorisations such as travel experiences, the purpose of travel, and gender, and tailor their interactions based on their likely demands. Staff forming such expectations before actual encounters could have either a positive or negative influence on the resultant co-creation of the experiences. The receptionists may successfully meet the expectations of the guests and may co-create guests' expected experiences positively. Conversely, if the receptionist's perception of guest expectations is incorrect, it might negatively affect the co-created experience for the guest.

On the part of the managers, their main concern is creating a memorable experience for the guests. Therefore they set out to train staff and invest in designing servicescapes which will please the guests. By doing this, managers hope to create an atmosphere for guests to co-create an experience. The managers' goal in co-creating such memorable experiences for guests is partly to generate return business. Thus, all the stakeholders of the co-created experiences have expectations, and these expectations drive the kind of behaviours exhibited during the interactions of the reception experience. This study has established that in co-creating guests' reception experiences, stakeholders' expectations is a key factor.

The reception experience, as the 'first impression' of service experience, is likely to have an important role in determining repeat visit intentions.

7.4.2 Local Hospitality experience co-creation

Managers, receptionists and guests in this study have a perception that hospitality is critical to the overall co-creation of the reception experiences. The hospitality experiences offered by the hotels were similar with the same intention of creating a memorable experience regardless of whether the hotel is local or international branded. The study found that managers and receptionists put in considerable effort to co-construct successful hospitality experiences with the guests (Mossberg, 2007).

The evocation of hospitality begins at the reception welcome which, from the findings of this study incorporates Ghanaian cultural elements (the welcoming phrase 'Akwaaba' and a smile). This welcoming experience involves 'personalisation' which requires not only skills but a considerable effort on the part of the staff.

Even the other African countries say Ghanaians are hospitable. When they come and see the smiles, they are not surprised" (P15 R).

To warmly interact with the guests, receptionists address them by name and title if known. Addressing people by their titles is important to Ghanaians as it is a show of respect. Personalisation is important in co-creation, and a hotel might use guest names or personal information with the intent of making a guest feel special and that the hotel staff are treating them as important guests (Ariffin & Maghzi 2012). From the perspective of a significant majority of guests, they experience hospitality right from the airport and on arrival at the front office, they are warmly greeted by friendly staff.

Given staffs' skills and expertise are important to the co-creating process, receptionists believed that they possess traits, abilities and social skills (such as friendliness). These social skills help them to relate to guests from diverse backgrounds and to tolerate their differences. They believe such qualities are necessary for the job of a receptionist and to co-create hospitable experiences.

"I like the experience. I like meeting new people. I like encountering new cultures, and then sometimes the friendships go beyond worker-client. Some guests who stay for long become friends even when they go out; we still exchange emails, ... there are quite some good tips at the hotel environment" (P6 R).

The receptionist's beliefs about being friendly to show hospitality to guests from different background could be problematic, given friendliness could be interpreted differently from different cultural perspectives. While guests from Northern Europe, Latin America and Canada perceive friendliness to be important to their hotel experience, (Torres, et al. 2014) friendliness can be misinterpreted by guests from Israel as naivety (Rafaeli & Sutton 1989). Therefore hotels need to consider different cultural groups and to cater to their preferences.

Managers and staff co-create hospitality experiences with the guest to enhance the reception experience. Managers and staff must, therefore, take considerable care in providing hospitality as it is critical to the experience. This is complicated, however, by the fact that there are cultural differences in the way different people interpret hospitality. This complexity emphasises the advanced set of social skills required by reception staff and also implies that managers also need an awareness of how to support those skills.

7.4.3 Key players in co-creating the reception experience in Ghana

Co-creation generally occurs between the customer and the service provider; nonetheless, this study suggests that it involves a broader circle of people than just a guest and the receptionists. Guests engage in a range of interactions with other parties. These parties include other guests, staff (such as drivers, door attendants or concierge), managers, friends and families both inside and outside the hotel (Harkison 2018; Lin, et al. 2020; McColl-Kennedy, et al. 2015). This section will have a focus on the role of guest, managers and reception staff in co-creating the reception experience.

Hotel Guests

The hotel guest is at the centre of the reception experience, not only because they purchase the experience but also because they are involved in its co-creation, and so are part-producers of the product they consume. For the hotel experience to be successful, it has to be based on the connection between the receptionist (host) and the guest and the willingness of the guest to engage in the proposed reception experience offered by the hotel (Alcántara-Alcover, et al. 2013).

In reception experiences, guests could be considered as human resources and partial employees of the hotel, given they co-create and participate in both the production and consumption of service experiences. Guests as partial employees are said to be involved in Customer Citizenship Behaviour (CCR), "defined as voluntary and discretionary behaviours that are not required for the successful production and delivery of the service but that, in the aggregate, help the service organisation overall" (Groth 2005, p. 11). According to Liu and Tsaur (2014), customers, guests and tourists could be considered partial employees in service-related organisations such as hotels and group packaged tours. Guests are no longer perceived as a mere recipient of service but as potential human resources to assist with the co-creation of the reception experience, such as giving feedback on their reception experiences and helping other guests (Groth 2005; Yi, Natarajan, & Gong 2011). In this study managers and receptionists indicated they receive feedback from guests, and it helps them to plan and tailor the reception experiences to satisfy their guests. Guests also provide suggestions for service

improvement and show the relationship of affiliation with the hotel, (particularly the loyal guests). Also, guest complaints help them to improve their reception provisions.

While guests in this study have different characteristic and backgrounds, managers and receptionists claim guest characteristics such as gender, age, the purpose of travel and cultural background influence guest expectations and experiences. This substantiates findings from Ariffin and Maghzi (2012) that the expectation of hotel hospitality is influenced by personal factors such as gender, age, and purpose of stay. Regarding gender, the receptionists perceive women to have higher expectations for hospitality than men. This finding contradicts the finding of (Ariffin & Maghzi 2012) that males have a higher expectation of hospitality than women and (Kim & Kim 1995). However, the findings were in agreement with the literature on gender which suggests females are socially oriented and would want more interactions compared to males who are goal-oriented (Simpson, et al. 2016). For example, this study found that women enjoy interactions more than men and leisure guests enjoy more interaction than business guests. A significant majority of receptionists also reported male guests enjoy interacting with female receptionists and vice versa. Given co-creation involves a network of people, as indicated earlier the receptionist role is also critical to the experience. Again, receptionists need awareness of subtle and not so subtle distinctions between types of guests so as to create the right kinds of interactions

The hotel receptionists

The receptionists are the core part of the service and the most visible element of the service experience, and they significantly determine memorable service experience (Lovelock, et al. 2014; Walls, et al. 2011; Woods, et al. 2007).

The study reveals the importance of staff characteristics which is understandable given the link between face-to-face interaction (co-creation) and staff attributes. As has been indicated, people are an inseparable part of the intangible aspect of hospitality service. Among factors that determine experience quality in the hotel is the role of frontline staff in co-creating the service experience (Poria, et al. 2011). The staff attitude, professional behaviour, proactive service, and professional appearance combine to make service experience (Walls, et al. 2011). Given this, managers look for the requisite skills in their receptionists before employing them. According to the managers, they give regular training to their receptionist to have the requisite skills to serve the guest and produce memorable guest experiences.

While the receptionists in this study are well educated, experienced, and sometimes overqualified for their positions, top management positions were occupied by migrants (see section 5.1.1 and 5.1.2).

Ghanaians find it difficult getting to management positions in the hotel industry. Developing economies face challenges as a result of tourism development in which local people, as in this case, often being highly (over) qualified tend to occupy unskilled service and low paying positions, such as waiters, porters and security guards, whereas the highly paid job positions, such as supervisory and managerial positions, are occupied by migrants (Akama & Kieti 2007; Ashley, et al. 2000; Scheyvens 2002). Mbaiwa (2005) is of a similar opinion that tourism can serve as a form of internal colonialism where tourism resources in a community benefit foreigners as compared to the majority of their local community counterparts who derive insignificant or no benefit.

In the developing country of Ghana, receptionists are paid 700 to 1200 Ghana Cedis (181.13 – 315.65 NZD) per month while the average rate of a hotel room per night is 900 to 2,700 Ghana Cedis (236.74 – 710.21 NZD). This pay rate of receptionists establishes material and socio-economic differences between affluent tourists staying at the hotels and low paid receptionists (Akama & Kieti 2007). This challenge may affect staff motivation and job satisfaction and consequently impact the way they co-create the reception service experience guests.

The managers confirmed that the receptionists are key when it comes to providing excellent service and the firm's competitive advantage (Lovelock, et al. 2014). The receptionists are important to both the guest and the hotel; the level of service and the way it is co-created by the receptionist is an essential source of service differentiation and also a competitive advantage for the hotel. The study also found managers are key players in co-creating the reception experiences.

The Hotel Managers

Managers act as facilitators of the reception experience. Front Office Managers indicated that apart from their managerial role in ensuring desired experiences are co-created with receptionists at reception, they also co-create the reception experience with guests. According to the Front Office Managers, they check-in guests and make appearances at the front office to greet guests and engage them in conversation. Managers giving a helping hand during busy check-in periods made the receptionists felt supported. A few of the guests said they felt special to be checked in by a highly ranked member of the hotel staff such as the Front Office Manager or the Rooms Divisions Manager.

This study has revealed that the hotel reception experience is co-constructed. Therefore managers must put efforts into staff training to be able to handle the interaction which is the moment of truth right from the airport. To ensure guest have a memorable experience which can lead to repeat visits and also word-of-mouth recommendation.

Again the nuanced complexity of this co-creation process requires managers to understand their role in that process and support their staff. In spite of being in one sense a 'small part' of the global experiences of people today, it can be fundamental to those same experiences.

7.5 Conclusion

The findings of the study have been discussed taking into consideration the theoretical foundations which underpinned the study: co-creation, servicescapes and the experience economy as they are involved in creating hotel experiences within a developing nation context. The main aim of this study was to explore the hotel reception experience in a developing country context of Ghana from the perspective of guests, staff and managers, recognising that these experiences are co-created in a particular context.

This study has highlighted the importance of the servicescapes—the physical environment of an organisation—to the stakeholders of the hotel. In particular, the role culture plays in the experience is broad and includes the culture of the hosts, the guests and the wider destination setting. Given the uniqueness of both guests and hosts culture, they influence the expectations and perceptions of reception experiences in complex ways. Therefore in designing hotels' reception, a carefully considered cultural touch could be put in place. For example, the inclusion of local artefacts could bring about a form of differentiation from other international hotel brands and enhance guest experiences.

This study has emphasized that for all stakeholders (guests, receptionists and managers) human interaction (i.e., the encounter between guests and staff) is critical to the reception experience. Given that the hotel reception experience is co-created, managers must put efforts into staff training to be able to handle the range of interactions that can occur at that site. The interaction is the 'moment of truth' to ensure the guest will have a memorable experience that starts right at the airport. Memorable experiences could lead to repeat visits and also word-of-mouth recommendations.

This research clearly illustrates how co-creation is important to guests' experiences but also raises questions about the impact of the encounter on staff. The findings of this study show that sometimes the co-creation process can produce significant problems, which was not anticipated. The experiences of the hotel receptionist formed the springboard for the analysis presented in the next chapter (Chapter Eight). Nevertheless, the discussion in this chapter has demonstrated that the three theories initially focused upon are key to understanding the creation of the experiences; therefore it justifies their being combined to study hotel reception experiences.

Chapter 8

Discussion: Receptionists experience of the co-created hotel reception encounter

8.1 Introduction

This study was designed to understand reception experiences in a developing economy and made use of the theories of the experience economy, co-creation and servicescapes. The data collection and reporting, and the analysis and interpretation were guided by these three theories as discussed in previous chapters (see Chapter Three for discussion of the theories and Chapters Five and Six for the results). Nonetheless, the study found evidence of quite serious challenges encountered by receptionists as a result of their face-to-face interactions with guests. While the discovery of difficult staff-customer interactions is not itself new (Bailey & McCollough 2000), the intensity and central significance of these findings to the co-creation of successful reception experiences was not expected. These results, therefore, prompted a new research question and a search for other theories to understand the 'disrupting results', as will be discussed.

The findings discussed in this chapter provide detailed descriptions of how hotel staff perceived their co-created reception experiences with the guest in the hotels. To address research question two and five (new question) of the study:

What are the expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience by different stakeholders (guests, staff, and managers)?

How can the pressures faced by hotel receptionists, be understood and addressed?

The findings of this study as discussed in Chapter Five show that receptionists are also recipients of the co-created reception experience. First, this chapter provides a detailed discussion of the concept to help understand the experiences of the receptionists. Second, it presents the findings of the experiences of the hotel receptionists. Third, it then presents a detailed and theoretically informed discussion of the results and their contribution to the hotel and tourism literature.

The findings of this study (as presented in section 8.5) show the experiences of the receptionists in the hotels in Ghana. Consideration of the data on these experiences made it clear that further theoretical tools were necessary to interpret the experiences of receptionists. Investigation of related literature led to the conclusion that the experiences are closely related to the concept of emotional

labour. Therefore it is necessary to discuss the broader literature associated with emotional labour to put findings from this study into a broader theoretical context and one which is complementary to the other theoretical concepts that served as the initial foundation for the study (i.e., the experience economy, the servicescape, and co-creation).

8.2 Emotional Labour and Hospitality

There is increased competition in the hospitality industry. As a result of this increased competition hospitality businesses emphasise “service with a smile” (Kim, Yoo, Lee, & Kim 2012, p. 1) to enhance the service experience. Guests and managers expect hospitality staff to provide customer-tailored service. Staff are required to possess the technical and mental skills to provide such services. In addition to these skills, staff are also expected to display a specific image and portray particular types of emotions as part of interacting with guests. This image and form of emotionality are assumed to be integral to successful service experiences.

As a consequence, service staff are expected to act and present in ways that are not spontaneous and even to express emotions they may not feel. How staff manage their emotional displays has been recognised as an important aspect of maintaining loyal customers (Kim, et al. 2012). Frontline staff are therefore expected to manage their emotions and make a considerable effort in displaying friendly emotions when interacting with guests (Karatepe 2010). The purpose of this management of the emotions of frontline staff is to create positive experiences for guests. This behavioural expectation of frontline staff is related to what was termed ‘impression management’ by Goffman (1959). Impression management, also called self-presentation, is the conscious or subconscious process by which people attempt to influence others’ perceptions of themselves, an object or event by regulating and controlling information in social interactions (Goffman 1959). However, the challenges faced by frontline staff goes beyond the management of impressions. As indicated earlier, staff are also supposed to manage their emotions. Jobs that require the management of an individual’s emotions have been theorised to involve what Hochschild (1983) called emotional labour (see 8.2.1 for further details).

There are several reasons why the concept of emotional labour has particular relevance to the hotel service experience literature. First, the hotel receptionists are frontline service personnel who are situated at the hotel and guest interface and thus represent the hotel to the guests. Second, service experiences often involve face-to-face interactions between the receptionists and the guests in which emotional expression and experience are integral. Third, the services co-created during the experiences are relatively intangible. The above factors place a premium on the behaviour of the

receptionist during the co-creation of experiences, and this behaviour strongly affects guest perceptions of the reception experience (Hochschild 2012).

8.2.1 The Concept of Emotional Labour

The concept of emotional labour, as used in research on the service industry, has evolved over recent decades. This section considers the main definitions and models of emotional labour that have developed over time, culminating in consideration of a model proposed by Grandey (2000) which is discussed in detail. Worth noting in the context of the current study of reception experiences in a developing country is that these models have originated in work based in developed, especially Western, countries, principally in the United States. Consequently, the complex role of cultural context is not prominent. Hochschild provides the starting point.

Hochschild's Model

The American sociologist Hochschild wrote a seminal book in which she coined the notion of 'emotional labour'. In *The Managed Heart: Commercialization of Human Feeling* (Hochschild 1983). Hochschild drew on and extended the work of Goffman (1959) who suggested that people often change their emotional expression and present emotions at variance with how they may feel in a given situation. According to Hochschild (2012), emotional labour requires management of feelings by frontline staff to create a publicly visible facial and bodily display with a focus on showing appropriate, organisationally-desired emotions. Most obviously, even though frontline staff may not feel like smiling, they are expected to put on an appearance of cheerfulness through smiles and gestures for the guest to feel satisfied. In this sense, emotional labour can be regarded as an integral part of the job of frontline staff. Further, frontline staff receive payment for their job, which implies that this kind of labour has an exchange value (Hochschild 2012). This results in what is called the commercialisation of feeling, which describes the exploitation of the emotions of workers for commercial gain (Hochschild 2012).

Jobs that require emotional labour have three important characteristics: (1) the necessity of staff to talk to or communicate face-to-face with customers; (2) the behaviours of staff have emotional meaning for the party served; and (3), there is an opportunity to manage and supervise staff emotions. In this sense, the features of emotional labour comprise the nature of work done, the emotional value created in the person served, and a process that can be monitored and controlled by the employer (Hochschild 2012).

Hochschild's study of emotional labour focused on the negative consequences of emotional labour for customer service staff, and the reason was that servers may not always feel the emotions they are obliged to portray. In other words, service staff could experience unfavourable outcomes because of dissonance between their actual feelings and the feelings that are expected to be expressed; for instance, a staff member may not feel happy but may be compelled to display a feeling of happiness. In practice, emotional labour compels staff to exhibit what feelings they must express (to satisfy the guest) and not what they are feeling in reality (Hochschild 2012).

According to Hochschild 2012, the sense of what a person ought to feel is framed by society. In every society, there are rules regarding what a person ought to feel in a given circumstance. The literature outlines two types of rules: feeling rules and display rules (Hochschild 2012). Feeling rules, according to Hochschild (2012), concern norms about what a person ought to experience in specific situations (for example, on a wedding day or in a restaurant). Display rules become associated with these norms and are defined as “unconscious automatic habits that modify or alter facial expression per the social situation” (Harper, Wiens, & Matarazzo 1978, p. 101). In Hochschild’s view, service staff are expected to adopt these rules and manage their feelings accordingly.

Hochschild (2012) suggested that the form of emotional labour displayed in any job has two features, namely, *surface acting* (faking the expected emotions) and *deep acting* (experiencing the desired emotions). Surface acting refers to the management of external emotional expression without any changes in inner feeling (Hochschild 2012) (see section 8.5.1 for further details). Unlike surface acting, deep acting requires staff to modify their inner feelings to express organisationally desired emotions (Hochschild 2012) (see section 8.5.1 for further details).

In surface acting the service, staff deceives only the one being served. In deep acting, by contrast, staff deceive both the customer and themselves by tricking the mind into accepting that something is true when it is, in fact, untrue. Relatedly, customers can often distinguish between fake and real smiles and performances, which is why the perception of authenticity may influence customer satisfaction (Pugh 2001) (see section 8.5.1 for further details).

Research has shown that while emotional labour plays an important role in service experiences, it may also cause negative consequences to both the personal life of individuals (staff) and the job performance in the organisation. These negative consequences range from staff health and psychological well-being to customer service performance (Lam & Chen 2012). For example, staff health from excessive emotional labour can result in stress, emotional exhaustion and depression (Prati, Liu, Perrewé, & Ferris 2009).

As originally presented, the theory of emotional labour was highly critical of management's interference with staffs' feelings (Hochschild 2012). Hochschild (2012) suggested that staff displaying an emotion publicly that they may not inwardly feel can have the effect of alienating those staff from their actual emotions while causing severe burnout and stress. As a consequence, emotional labour can result in work alienation. Alienation has been described as a psychological distancing of people from their environment (Yildirim & Turker 2018). Hochschild (2012) emphasized that performing emotional labour could damage the ability to learn from feelings and makes those (service staff) who do it lose touch with their true selves.

Rafaeli and Sutton's model

Writing from Israel and the United States of America, Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) introduced a conceptual framework that identifies the sources of display rules, the process of emotional expression, and its outcomes. They suggested the sources of display rules come from the organisational context and the kind of interpersonal exchanges between staff and customer, depending on the context. The organisational context includes practices of selection, socialisation, training and reward, which influence the emotions displayed by members of a particular organisation. Rafaeli and Sutton (1989), later in their article, reframed these sources as a function of societal norms, occupational norms and organisational norms. These are often referred to as antecedents in the literature.

The expression of emotions takes place during the interpersonal exchange or 'emotional transaction' (Rafaeli & Sutton 1987) which is how a member of the service staff responds and adjusts to the reaction of the 'customer' to maintain the appropriate emotional expression. Once the emotions are expressed, there are outcomes for both the organisation and the staff. For the organisation, such outcomes may be immediate gains such as the customer's perception of high-quality service which may result in higher sales and/or repeat customers. Creating awareness of a service, be it positive or negative, through word-of-mouth, is regarded as a powerful form of communication (Rafaeli & Sutton 1987). For the staff, outcomes may be financial, such as waiters receiving tips, or mental and physical, where the pressure of performing emotional labour might adversely affect psychological wellbeing. For Rafaeli and Sutton (1987) these outcomes of the emotional transaction make a significant contribution since they draw together antecedents, dimensions and consequences of emotional labour that have been highlighted frequently in subsequent literature.

According to Rafaeli and Sutton (1987), the complex combinations of body language and words through which emotions are expressed make the study of displayed feelings methodologically

challenging. It has been left to subsequent theorists and researchers to address this challenge in the context of emotional labour. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) apply an interactionist model of emotions, and emphasise the significance of individuals' identification with social groups.

Ashforth and Humphrey's model

Ashforth and Humphrey were writing from Canada and the United States of America. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) reinforce the social interactionist nature of emotional labour by applying social identity theory. It describes the self-concept as a personal identity, shaped by individual characteristics and involving identification with a particular social group. Different social groups have their own display rules and role expectations. The more one's workplace role expectations conflict with those of the group with which one identifies, the greater the chance of emotional dissonance (based on the idea of cognitive dissonance Hochschild, (2003, 2012) which results in a negative impact on wellbeing.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993, p. 90) defined emotional labour as "the act of displaying the appropriate emotions" (that is conforming to a display rule). This approach differs from Hochschild's definition in certain respects. In their definition, the emphasis is not on the emotions that form or generate the behaviour but on the behaviour itself. It was suggested that the individual could comply with the display rules without having to manage feelings. They criticised Hochschild's assertion that compliance to display rules occurs only in two ways: surface acting (emotive effort) and deep acting (emotive dissonance). These two strategies do not completely capture the issues of emotional labour (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993). Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) nevertheless admitted that surface acting and deep acting are two strategies hospitality staff use. However, they added a third feature to Hochschild (2012) dimensions of surface acting and deep acting. They referred to this additional feature as "naturally felt emotions" (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993, p. 94). Ashforth and Humphrey's model is different from Hochschild's model in terms of the outcome of emotional labour.

Ashforth & Humphrey 1993 focus on emotional labour as observable behaviour in what could perhaps be described as a behaviourist approach, downplaying the management of feelings and the effects of surface acting and deep acting on stress and health (Grandey 2000). This emphasis makes it easier to observe and measure emotional labour. However, it has been argued that ignoring the broader aspect of emotional management that involves dealing with internal feelings makes a connection to consequences such as burnout more challenging to assess (Bono and Vey, 2005). The ideas discussed so far are brought together concisely in the work of (Morris & Feldman 1996).

Morris and Feldman's model

Morris and Feldman (1996, p. 987) define emotional labour “as the effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions”. Morris and Feldman (1996) model differ from both Hochschild (2012) and Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) models since it incorporates both organisational and individual factors affecting emotional labour. Instead of examining emotional labour in terms of emotive dissonance and emotive effort, they examine emotional labour in terms of dimensions of the emotional labour process. They emphasise the dissonance between experienced feelings and what expressed feelings. Their definition is based on four interrelated assumptions (Morris & Feldman 1996). First, their model is embedded in an interactionist understanding of emotion. According to the interactionist model of emotion, the social factors and the environment in which the sensation is experienced have a critical role in feeling and displaying the emotion. Therefore, the character of the social structure determines the content of emotional labour (Morris & Feldman 1996). Second, and also consistent with the interactionist model of emotion, (Morris & Feldman 1996) argued that staff must make a certain level of effort to display appropriate emotions, even in situations in which there is congruence between the individual's felt emotion and the organizationally desired emotion. That is, there will still be some degree of effort (or labour) required in expressing emotions (e.g., the feeling of happiness has to be displayed in an appropriate smile or greeting). Morris and Feldman (1996) argued that Wal-Mart greeters who experience emotional congruence between their own felt emotions and the emotions required by the job still have to expend some effort ensuring that the felt positive emotion is actually displayed in desirable forms, although they will expend clearly less labour than if their felt emotions conflicted with the required emotions. Third, consistent with Hochschild's (1983) original notion of emotional labour, Morris and Feldman (1996) argued that their definition of emotional labour suggests that the expression of emotion, which was once privately determined, has now become a commercial commodity. Indeed, the emotional expression of the service worker has become part of the service itself. The fourth point, according to Morris and Feldman (1996), relates to standards and rules that specify how and when emotions should be expressed.

Grandey's Model

Also writing from the United States of America, Grandey (2000) proposed a model of emotional labour that combined previous studies (see Figure 8.1). She suggested that “emotional labour should be analysed in two dimensions as deep acting and surface acting” (Grandey 2000, p. 100) as indicated by Hochschild (2012). Grandey (2000) argued that antecedent-focused emotion regulation involves staff modifying their perception of a service encounter and adjusting their emotion beforehand. The

emotional adjustment results in a form of deep acting during the service interaction. By contrast, response-focused emotion regulation involves staff adjusting their emotional expression to the situation as it unfolds, which is a reactive approach that corresponds to surface acting.

Grandey (2000) 'conceptual framework of emotion regulation', incorporates various antecedents from the literature, such as interaction expectations and emotional events. Interaction expectations include the duration of encounter, frequency and variety of emotional display, and required display rules. Emotional events include positive and negative events which are referred to as situational cues (Figure 8.1). In addition, Grandey (2000) identifies individual factors (gender, emotional expressivity, emotional intelligence and affectivity) and organisational factors (job autonomy, supervisor support and co-worker support) as shaping the emotional regulation process (see section 8.5 for further discussion).

According to Grandey (2000), the actual process of emotional labour is presented as both deep acting, where feelings are modified through attentional deployment and cognitive change before the interaction, and surface acting, where expression is modified at the time of responding to a cue in the encounter (Figure 8.1). The interaction of all these elements leads to positive and negative consequences. Nevertheless, Grandey (2000) placed much emphasis on the negative consequences of emotional labour on workers' health and wellbeing, and organisational performance. Grandey's model is of particular relevance to this study because it touches on gender, work in the service sector and management relationships. It also allows for the possibility of the influence of pre-emptive preparation and training in the management of emotional labour, which extends responsibility for this form of labour beyond the individual frontline staff member.

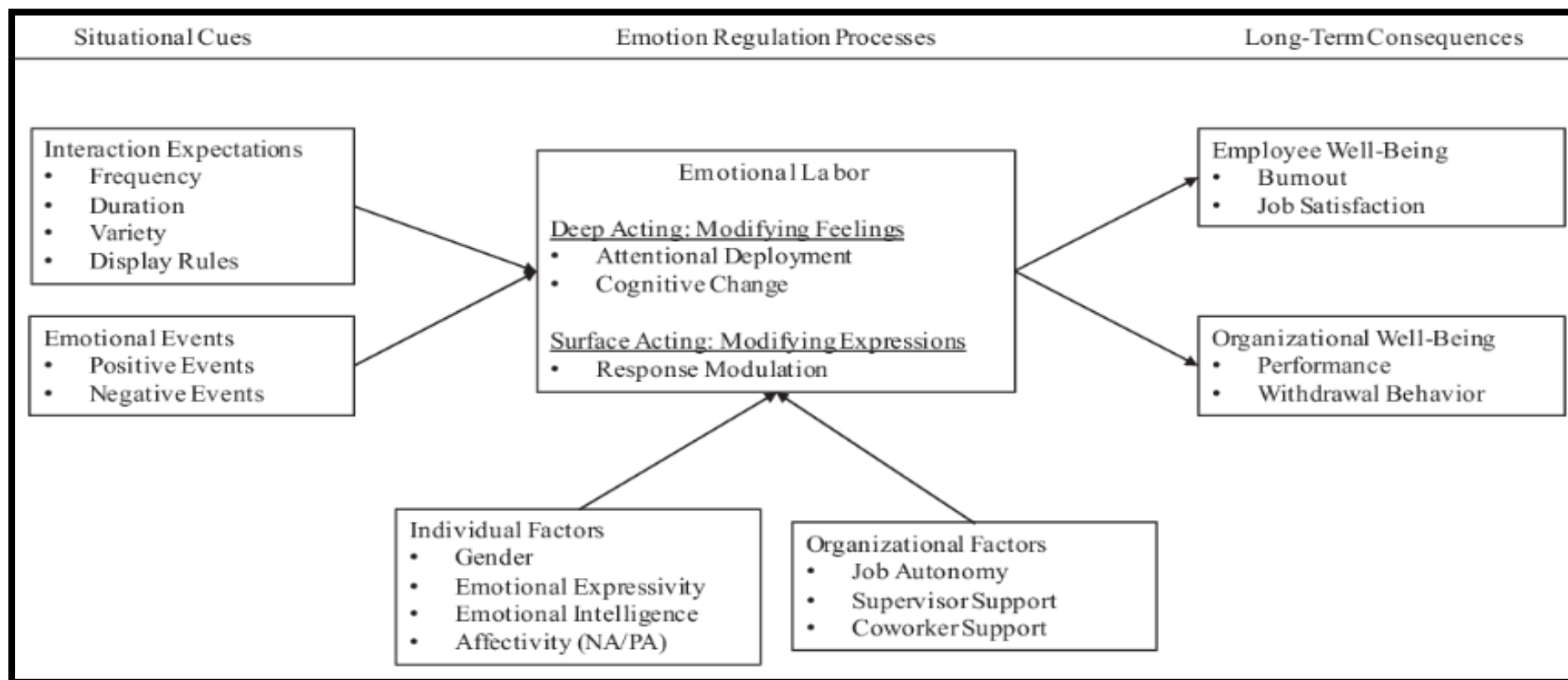


Figure 8.1 Grandey's Model of Emotional Labour (Grandey 2000).

8.2.2 Forms of emotional labour in hospitality

As indicated earlier, there are different forms of emotional labour, such as surface acting, deep acting (see section 8.2.1), and genuine acting or automatic regulation (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993; Grandey 2000; Hochschild 1983; Morris & Feldman 2012). The first emotional labour strategy is surface acting. Grandey (2003) explained that surface acting corresponds to response-focused emotional regulation in which staff modify the outward expression of their emotions through suppressing, faking, or amplifying emotional displays. In surface acting, the service staff pretends to feel certain emotions by demonstrating an appropriate outward countenance or gestures; for example, service staff may create the impression of friendliness by wearing a big smile and giving a handshake. In surface acting “the body, not the soul, is the main tool of the trade [and the] actor’s (the service provider’s) body evokes passion in the *audience’s* soul, but the actor is only acting as if he had feelings” (Hochschild 2012, p. 37).

The focus of surface acting is changing outward behaviour (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993) and occurs when a worker’s felt emotion differs from her/his displayed emotion. Surface acting may be described as ‘faking in good faith’ when a genuine concern is expressed but with, for example, hidden anxieties or ‘faking in bad faith’ when responses are routine and may appear insincere (Rafaeli & Sutton 1987, p. 32). In many contexts, surface acting involves faking (or evoking) positive emotions and suppressing negative emotions (Hochschild 1979). However, there are occupations where this is reversed, such as police officers, and bill collectors (Hochschild 2012; Stenross & Kleinman 1989).

In surface acting, there is a discrepancy between felt and displayed emotions. This discrepancy creates emotional dissonance. Emotional dissonance is related to emotional exhaustion (Grandey 2003; Morris & Feldman 1997). By contrast, the second strategy of emotional labour is deep acting. Deep acting refers to the process of trying to change one’s feelings to what is required by the display rules. That is, the service staff try to experience the emotion that is appropriate for the situation. In deep acting the service delivery, the staff make an effort to bring out the actual feeling that they need to feel by ‘tricking’ the mind; for example, in the case of a hard to please guest, a staff member may make up a fabricated story about why the guest is difficult. This may enable the staff member to empathise with the guest and therefore treat the guest with a better understanding (Lam & Chen 2012). While surface acting only manages visual expressions, deep acting attempts to change internal emotional states to meet organizational expectations (Grandey 2000). Hochschild (2012) suggested two ways of deep acting: the first is a direct exhortation of one’s emotions to suppress or awaken a feeling; the second

is indirect regulation of emotions by making use of gained experiences and trained imagination to exhibit the emotions expected by the service organisation.

In the deep acting strategy, even though dissonance is low, the effort required is often high (Kruml & Geddes 2000). However, it does not imply that performing deep acting leads to stress and burnout symptoms. On the contrary, deep acting could help service staff feel more engaged at work, experience a rewarding sense of contribution and build healthy relationships with customers (Kruml & Geddes 2000) (Kruml & Geddes 2000). The third form of emotional labour is an expression of genuine emotions.

Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) proposed another category of emotional labour, namely, expression of genuine emotion (genuine acting) or automatic regulation. They argued that previous research had neglected the possibility that staff can experience and display appropriate emotions spontaneously. For instance, there is a possibility that hotel employees truly feel sympathetic to a guest in a given situation or naturally have it in them to be hospitable to people, which means it is not necessary for them to engage in surface acting or deep acting. This type of innate expression is labelled emotional labour because it conforms to organizationally required emotions. (Diefendorff, Croyle, & Gosserand 2005) agreed that genuine acting or automatic regulation is a distinct type of emotion regulation performed automatically.

In summary, there are at least three forms of emotional labour performed in organisations that can be distinguished. There are determinants for these three forms of emotional labour in hospitality.

8.2.3 Determinants of emotional labour in hospitality

Grandey (2000, p. 101) indicated that “the antecedents of emotional regulations are the situational variables”. The situational variables act as cues from which emotions may result. According to Grandey (2000), in the context of emotional labour, the situational variables include what she termed in her model as the staff's “interaction expectation” with guests and “emotional events” Grandey (2000, p. 101) (see Figure 8.1).

Emotional labour and expectations interactions

A situational antecedent of emotional labour is the emotional demands of a particular encounter which is described as *customer interaction expectations* by Grandey (2000) (see Figure 8.1). Interaction expectations include frequency of interactions, duration of interactions, variety of interactions, and organisational display rules.

(Hochschild 2012) suggested that the characteristics of specific jobs may require a high level of emotional labour from the staff. The first interaction expectation is the *frequency* of interactions whether face-to-face or by voice. Different work roles hold different expectations for the staff when interacting with guests (Grandey 2000). Job roles may differ in the frequency that staff are expected to interact with guests. For example, a receptionist at a legal firm may welcome customers once an hour, but a cashier at a grocery store may meet ten customers an hour. The frequency of interactions is important because the higher the frequency of interactions in a role, the more likely it is that displays of emotion are regulated (Morris & Feldman 1996) and the more the use of surface acting and deep acting is necessary (Brotheridge & Lee 2003).

The second difference in interactions is the *duration* demand placed on staff. To this, Morris and Feldman (1996) added the characteristics of the duration of the interaction and variety of emotional expressions. The work role requirement of frequency and duration are situational factors that may increase the likelihood that staff must fake expressions or modify feelings. Thus, such factors are proposed as antecedents of emotional labour (Grandey 2000). For example, a sales clerk in a clothing store may work with a customer for hours, whereas a convenience store clerk may only interact with each customer for five minutes.

Regarding the duration of interactions, there are differences in the extent of emotional display between shorter and longer encounters. While Rafaeli (1989) and Leidner (1999) suggested that shorter interactions are usually highly scripted, requiring less effort and fewer emotional displays, longer interactions are different. Cordes and Dougherty (1993) suggested that the longer the emotional display lasts, the less scripted the interaction becomes and the more emotional stamina is required. In such situations, it becomes harder to fake emotions, which leads staff to often choose to use deep acting (Diefendorff, et al. 2005).

According to Hochschild (1983), other characteristics of jobs requiring emotional labour are that the organization expects and controls the emotional expression of the staff. This characteristic is evident in perceptions of *display rules*: how much staff recognise that certain emotional expressions are part of the job. These work role characteristics can be thought of as ongoing situations to which staff respond with emotion regulation (Grandey 2000). Another situational variable as a determinant of emotional labour is emotional events.

Emotional events

Emotional events are circumstances that call for instant emotional regulation to be able to perform emotional labour (see Figure 8.1). An event at work can be appraised for its positive or negative influence on the person's psychological well-being. In particular, if the event interferes with the staff

member's goals, one of which is to express and induce positive emotions, the event will be appraised negatively (Frijda 1986; Grandey 2000). While negative events are termed 'hassles', positive events are termed 'uplifts'. Hassles are minor events that reflect irritating, frustrating and distressing demands in everyday interaction. On the other hand, uplifts are minor events that bring joy and happiness. An example of the latter is timely recognition from supervisors.

Affective events may serve as situational cues and influence emotional labour strategies (Grandey 2000). The reason is affective work events have a direct effect on a staff member's emotions and influence how the staff member feels at a given time. An emotional event may cause more emotional regulation, especially when there is a difference between the emotions evoked by the event and the emotions required by display rules (Grandey 2000). Studies have linked affective events to staff emotions, attitudes and deviant workplace behaviour (Judge, Scott, & Ilies 2006; Keeffe & Russell-Bennett 2006). There are individual factors which influence emotional labour in service work.

8.2.4 Individual factors related to emotional labour

According to Ashforth and Humphrey (1993), variables other than job-related factors may impact guest service and the emotional labour process. Personal factors, but not specifically job-oriented factors, can affect the capacity for emotional regulation of staff. These individual factors include demographic factors such as gender and personality. But there are a variety of other individual emotion-related factors apart from demographic characteristics, which contribute to emotional labour. These emotional factors include emotional expressivity, emotional intelligence, self-monitoring, and affectivity (see Figure 8.1).

Gender differences become an issue for emotional labour because the majority of service jobs are performed by females (Hochschild 2012). According to Wharton and Erickson (1993), females are more likely to manage emotions at work as well as at home. A relatively consistent finding is that females are expected to and do show greater emotional intensity and emotional expressiveness than males, and such differences hold for both positive and negative emotions (Brody & Hall 2008). If females engage in more emotion management situations, perhaps they are better at managing emotions (so performance would be better). Still, they would be engaging in more suppression of true feelings (so the stress would be higher) (Wharton & Erickson 1993).

The differences between males and females in terms of emotions may be due to role development. While females are socialized to be more emotionally expressive, males are socialized to be more emotionally restrained (Brannon 2016; Grondin, Laflamme, Bienvenue, Labonté, & Roy 2015; Herrera, Wang, & Mather 2019). Further, socialization pressures also influence the types of emotions that females and males are expected to express. Positive, relationship-facilitating emotions such as warmth

and cheer are considered more role-appropriate for females than males, whereas negative, distancing emotions such as anger and hostility are seen as more role-appropriate for males than females (Brody & Hall 2008; Lindsey 2015).

Regarding surface acting, when females attempt to mask or fake emotion, they might experience more significant emotional dissonance because their actions are at odds with their tendency to display and express what they are feeling. Males, however, might experience less emotional dissonance, because they are more accustomed to hiding emotions from others and faking affective states (McDuff, Kodra, Kaliouby, & LaFrance 2017; Wu, Han, & Mattila 2016). Wu, Lu, Chen, and Xiang (2018) suggested females are more likely to experience emotional dissonance than males. Another aspect of Individual factors related to emotional labour is emotional expressivity.

Emotional expressivity as a personality characteristic has been studied as a predictor of health and job performance (Newnham 2017; Wu, et al. 2018). Emotional expressivity refers to the degree to which people display positive or negative emotion (Kring, Smith, & Neale 1994). There is the likelihood for persons high in positive expressivity to be skilled at meeting organizational display rules (Grandey 2000). Such persons might report lower levels of emotional labour and perform better in service jobs. Expressivity is also related to gender, with females reporting higher levels than males (Brannon 2016; Grondin, et al. 2015; Rafaeli & Sutton 1989). Emotional intelligence is another individual factor that relates to emotional labour.

Emotional intelligence is critical to individual and organisational outcomes, which include staff health and psychological well-being to customer service performance, customer orientation and customer satisfaction (Grandey 2003; Karatepe, Yorganci, & Haktanir 2009; Lam & Chen 2012). Emotional intelligence is referred to as the ability to recognize and use emotional information in social interactions (Law, Wong, & Song 2004). Those with high emotional intelligence are skilled at handling social encounters and are able to make other people feel good about themselves (Goleman 1995). This is a desired characteristic in service experience encounters. Studies have found a positive significant relationship between emotional intelligence and emotional labour (Hwa & Amin 2016) such as among frontline hotel employees (Kim, et al. 2012). Further, persons with high levels of emotional intelligence exhibit fewer deviant behaviours than those with low levels of emotional intelligence (Harvey & Dasborough 2006). Therefore, emotional intelligence appears to lessen the effects of emotional labour. Another aspect of personality that is acknowledged in the literature is self-monitoring.

Self-monitoring refers to the extent that people monitor their self-presentations and control their expressive behaviour (Snyder, 1974). High self-monitors are more aware of the emotional cues of others. They are more willing and able to change their emotional expression to fit the situation than

low self-monitors. Low self-monitors tend to remain true to their internal feelings (Grandey 2000). Self-monitoring makes theoretical sense as an influential characteristic of emotional labour. In jobs where emotional labour is required, low self-monitors might have a more difficult time following display rules. If they want to keep their jobs, they need to adhere to emotional display rules, but they may be less at ease suppressing their true feelings than a high self-monitor. Thus, low self-monitors may report higher levels of emotional labour and higher levels of stress in guest service jobs (Grandey 2000). The psychological construct of affectivity provides a separate, distinct aspect of individual difference regarding how individuals display emotion.

Affectivity is the sum of individual mood states (Lee & Chelladurai 2016; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen 1988). Austin, Saklofske, Huang, and McKenney (2004) suggested that affectivity affects the levels and types of emotional labour displayed by service staff. Schaubroeck and Jones (2000, p. 182) indicated that “the extent to which individuals perceive that they are required to express or suppress certain types of emotional expression may depend as much on their emotional predispositions as it does on the objective characteristics of their organizational role”. Affectivity could be positive or negative. Positive affectivity relates to enthusiasm and optimism, and negative affectivity pertains to pessimism and aversive mood states (Grandey 2000).

According to Weiss and Cropanzano (1996), affective traits act as predispositions toward more or less intense emotional responses. A person high in negative affectivity may respond more strongly to negative events if they occur. This means a high negative affectivity person exerts more emotional labour to maintain the emotional display in the face of a difficult encounter. Affectivity has been proposed in theoretical models as a predictor of emotional labour. Morris and Feldman (1996) indicated that positive and negative affectivity relates to emotional labour. In particular, these researchers hypothesized that when the emotion work requirements (express positive or negative emotions) conflicted with affectivity (positive or negative affect), dissonance would occur.

Diefendorff, et al. (2005) found that individuals who are higher in positive affectivity have been found to put more effort into changing their inner feelings required by the display rule, and engage less in surface acting and more in deep acting.

Staw, Sutton, and Pelled (1994) suggested that felt and expressed positive emotions lead to favourable work outcomes for staff. Similarly, another study found the staff with high positive affectivity experience less emotive dissonance. Such staff used less emotive effort than staff with low positive affectivity (Augustine & Joseph 2008). Further, staff with high negative affectivity experience increased emotive dissonance. Such staff used more emotive effort than staff with low negative affectivity. The study concluded that staff with high emotive dissonance experience less job satisfaction and more emotional exhaustion than staff with low emotive dissonance (Augustine & Joseph 2008).

8.2.5 Organisational factors related to emotional labour

The work environment is an important factor in understanding emotion management. The situation in which staff work may affect the level and type of emotional labour (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993; Morris & Feldman 1996). Organisational factors related to emotional labour are feelings of autonomy at work and the support of supervisors and co-workers (see Figure 8.1).

Regarding *autonomy* (Grandey 2000) suggested that feeling a lack of control over events has been identified as a source of life stress. In Hochschild (2012) view, there is the unpleasantness of having the organization exert control over one's personal feelings. A few studies have tested the idea that job autonomy minimizes the stress of the emotion regulation process. A study by Wharton (1993), for example, found that people who reported high autonomy had lower emotional exhaustion in both high and low emotional labour-typed jobs. (Morris & Feldman 1996) found that job autonomy was negatively related to emotional dissonance and emotional exhaustion, and positively related to job satisfaction.

Supervisor and co-worker support (social support) can alleviate pressures and significantly affect service interactions. Support from co-workers and supervisors can create a positive working environment for service staff (Abugre 2012). For example, Abugre (2012) found that regular interactions between managers and staff have a direct positive effect on staff work output. Staff perceptions that they work in a supportive environment is beneficial in many ways. Social support helps staff to improve their work skills and performance, gain job satisfaction, lower stress and turnover intentions, and even generate higher team performance (Howes, Cropanzano, Grandey, & Mohler 2000; Kahn, Schneider, Jenkins-Henkelman, & Moyle 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker 2004; Zhong, Wayne, & Liden 2016). In guest experience organisations, where positive expressions are expected, feeling positive about the social environment may mean that less emotional labour is required. A staff member may genuinely feel the emotions that are expected in a service environment if the interpersonal relationships are positive and supportive. Indirectly, social support may help staff cope with the stress of service jobs (Grandey 2000).

At a more personal level, emotional labour presents long-term consequences which influence employee wellbeing and organisational wellbeing.

8.3 Emotional labour and staff wellbeing under scrutiny

There are both positive and negative consequences for individuals and organisations that come from performing emotional labour (see Figure 8.1). The consequences of emotional labour for staff such as burnout, self-esteem and job satisfaction are discussed next.

8.3.1 Emotional labour and staff wellbeing

Burnout is a stress outcome typically found in staff in customer helping organisations. Burnout occurs when an employee becomes overly emotionally involved in interactions with guests and has few ways to replenish the emotional resources being spent (Jackson, Schwab, & Schuler 1986). The signs of burnout are emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced personal accomplishment (Cordes & Dougherty 1993; Maslach 2003). When a situation induces repeated emotional responses that involve the staff having to regulate emotions, staff may experience emotional exhaustion, or energy depletion and fatigue. To cope with these feelings, staff may detach from the guests by objectifying or depersonalizing them, which may lead to feeling negative about themselves and their work, to the point where they experience a diminished sense of personal accomplishment (Cheng & Yi 2018; Cordes & Dougherty 1993).

Job satisfaction is a measure of the staff's evaluation of the job and has often been used as a proxy for staff well-being at work (Grandey 2000; Ashforth & Humphrey 1993; Hochschild 2012). The empirical research on the relationship between managing emotions at work and job satisfaction has been contradictory. This contradiction may be due to the use of different definitions of emotional labour. For example, while Hoschild's (1983) definition focuses on the negative consequences labour Ashforth & Humphrey 1993 argues that staff may be displaying naturally felt emotions. Their definition which focuses on the behaviour but not the emotions that generate the behaviour.

In addition to wellbeing impacts on individual staff members, emotional labour has particularly important consequences for service organisations such as hotels.

8.3.2 Emotional labour and organisational wellbeing

In the service industries, such as hotels, managing emotions (showing happiness and empathy, not fear or anger) is an important facet of maintaining loyal guests and repeat business (Hochschild 2012). Given that emotion regulation may be performed in different ways, it is likely that some methods are more effective than others and may affect performance on the job. As a means of presenting a positive image of the organization and inducing the appropriate feelings in guests, managing emotions may result in good guest service performance (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993). An emotional expression, such as smiles and friendly comments is welcoming.

Grandey (2000) proposed that emotion regulation results in physiological arousal that, over the long run, may affect withdrawal behaviours such as leaving the work floor, absenteeism, and turnover. These are outcomes that are of particular concern to customer service jobs, and thus, many individual differences may relate to emotional labour (See Figure 8.1). A summary of the models of emotional labour is presented in Table 8.1 which includes a description of the features strengths and weakness of each.

Table 8.1 Summary of theories of Emotional Labour

No.	Authors	Features	Strengths	Weaknesses
1	Hochschild's Model (1983, 2000)	<p>The features of emotional labour comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> the nature of work done, the emotional value created in the person served, and a process that can be monitored and controlled by the employer Emotional labour has two features; surface acting and deep acting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This model makes visible the negative consequences of emotional labour for customer service staff and organisations. The consequences include severe stress, emotional exhaustion, depression, work alienation. 	Deep acting and surface acting do not completely capture the issues of emotional labour.
2	Rafaeli and Sutton's model	<p>They describe the antecedents of emotional labour as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a function of societal norms occupational norms organisational norms 	<p>Emotional labour has outcomes for both the organisation and the staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For the organisation, high-quality service may result in higher sales and/or repeat customers and recommendations. For the staff, financial, such as waiters receiving tips, or mental and physical, adversely affect psychological wellbeing Draw together antecedents, dimensions and consequences of emotional labour highlighted frequently in subsequent literature. 	Their model does not capture the complex combinations of body language and words through which emotions are expressed.
3	Ashforth and Humphrey's model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In their definition of emotional labour, the emphasis is not on the emotions that form or generate the behaviour but on the behaviour itself. the individual could comply with the display rules without having to manage feelings focuses on emotional labour as observable behaviour downplaying the management of feelings and the effects of surface acting and deep acting on stress and health They admitted that surface acting and deep acting are two strategies hospitality staff use. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This model is different in terms of the outcome of emotional labour. The emphasis on behaviour makes it easier to observe and measure emotional labour. 	Ignoring the broader aspect of emotional management that involves dealing with internal feelings makes a connection to consequences such as burnout more challenging to assess.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They added a third feature referred to as 'naturally felt emotions' 		
4	Morris and Feldman's model	<p>They examine emotional labour in terms of dimensions of the emotional labour process:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded in an interactionist understanding of emotion, the social factors and the environment the character of the social structure determines the content of emotional labour • Consistent with the interactionist model staff must make a certain level of effort to display appropriate emotions. • The expression of emotion, which was once privately determined, has now become a commercial commodity. • Standards and rules specify how and when emotions should be expressed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It incorporates both organisational and individual factors affecting emotional labour. • Instead of examining emotional labour in terms of emotive dissonance and emotive effort, they examine emotional labour in terms of dimensions of the emotional labour process. 	Does not provide pointers to ways in which negative impacts can be addressed
5	Grandey's Model (2000)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional labour should be analysed in two dimensions as deep acting and surface as indicated by Hochschild. • Her conceptual framework of emotion regulation', incorporates various determinants of emotional labour for example, interaction expectations and emotional events. • identifies individual factors example, gender and emotional intelligence as shaping the emotional regulation process • identifies organisational factors, for example, supervisor support and co-worker support, as shaping the emotional regulation process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Placed much emphasises on the negative consequences of emotional labour on workers' health and wellbeing, and organisational performance. • Allows for the possibility of the influence of pre-emptive preparation and training in the management of emotional labour, which extends responsibility for this form of labour beyond the individual frontline staff member. • Gives pointers to ways in which negative impacts can be addressed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This model does not assesses the relationship of surface and deep acting to each other and the environment. • Does not examine the impact of surface and deep acting processes on customers

8.4 Emotional labour and cultural differences in hospitality

The culture of people builds and prescribes situational scripts in interpersonal contexts in different ways (Choi, Oishi, Shin, & Suh 2019). Research suggests that emotions are culture-specific (Allen, Diefendorff, & Ma 2014; Yang, Hong, & Sanchez-Burks 2019), which has significant implications for hospitality experiences given that not all emotions are suitable for hospitality experiences. Cultural differences may have various consequences for emotional labour. Further, emotion regulation and display rules for experiencing emotions are significantly different across cultures (Eid & Diener 2009; Matsumoto, Yoo, & Nakagawa 2008; Miyamoto, Ma, & Petermann 2014). What produces emotions, the duration and intensity of emotions, and the rules of how, when and what emotions are displayed, are all affected by cultural differences (Allen, et al. 2014; Yang, et al. 2019).

Studies have found significant differences in emotional display among cultures. A. Luo, Guchait, Lee, and Madera (2019) hypothesised that there are observable cultural differences of emotional labour between individualistic and collectivistic cultures. For example, Safdar, et al. (2009), in a multinational study, found a striking difference in emotional display rules among three cultural groups, Japanese, Canadians, and Americans. They found that Japanese display rules permit the expression of powerful emotions (anger, contempt, and disgust) significantly less than North Americans. The Japanese samples were found to express positive emotions (happiness, surprise) significantly less than the Canadian sample (Safdar, et al. 2009).

Again, Allen, et al. (2014) found that emotional regulation strategies (surface and deep acting) are reported to be used more often in China (a collectivistic culture) than in the United States (an individualistic culture). It is widely acknowledged that the main distinctions made between Eastern and Western cultures are that they differ in the levels of collectivism-individualism, and power distance (Hofstede 2001; Kitirattakarn, Araujo, & Neijens 2019). (As already noted, power distance is described as the extent to which society accept the fact that the power in institutions and organisations is distributed unequally (Hofstede 2001)). Scherr, Mares, Bartsch, and Goetz (2019) found that cultural factors explained the differences in children's expressions of the basic emotions of anger, fear, sadness, and happiness. Accordingly, differences in emotional labour across cultures could be partly explained by those cultural factors.

Below is a summary of how emotions have been found to differ cross-culturally:

1. The evaluation of situations and the interpretation of meaning are cross-culturally different; (Škerlavaj, Su, & Huang 2013)

2. In some cultures, the management of emotions is seen as undesirable; for example, people from Poland prefer to be spontaneous (Wierzbicka 1994).
3. The perception and performance of emotions differ across cultures. That is, the expression of emotions (intensity, duration, and also whether it is expressed or masked or substituted with another emotion), when they are expressed, the significance that is given to emotions, whether emotions are deemed desirable and undesirable (for example, anger is perceived as desirable and strongly encouraged in some cultures) all vary across cultures (Allen, et al. 2014; Yang, et al. 2019).
4. Emotions are also labelled differently; for example, the Japanese language equivalent of joy was reported to be accompanied by fewer physiological symptoms (Scherer et al. 1998, as cited in Mesquita & Frijda). The Japanese translation of joy, in a European or American sense, does not seem like joy at all (Wierzbicka 1994).

Though the Hochschild (1983) study did not discuss cross-cultural differences in emotions and the possibility that those differences impact emotional labour in service contexts, the study nonetheless acknowledged that “different social groups probably have special ways in which they recognise feeling rules and give rule reminders, and the rules themselves probably vary from group to group” (Hochschild 1983, p. 57).

Given the cross-cultural research on emotions, the emotional labour required of hospitality staff may vary from culture to culture; for example, smiling at customers may not be appropriate in every culture (Krys, et al. 2016). However, it is a general practice for hospitality service organisations to specify what emotions are appropriate, and when to show specific emotions. This general practice is ethnocentric as it does not take into account the differences in culture, which can impact how emotional labour is performed. Smiling at guests provides an example.

The commonly used facial display in the delivery of emotional labour is a smile. However, smiling is a symbolic expression with many complex and different uses (Krys, et al. 2016; Thibault, Levesque, Gosselin, & Hess 2012). The smile is a pan-cultural emblem but with culturally specific uses. In other words, every culture is familiar with smiling, but what smiling signifies may differ from one culture to another (Krys, et al. 2016; Thibault, et al. 2012). In Western cultures, smiling is a symbolic expression to welcome someone and to convey friendliness; therefore, customer service personnel are often instructed to smile at guests. In Muslim cultures, a smile exchanged between two people from the opposite sex signifies sexual interest. For this reason, executives of a New York bank discovered that female tellers from Muslim countries would not smile at male customers, despite corporate rules that they should do so (Rafaeli & Sutton 1989).

The simulated smile is used in different contexts to mask various emotions. In Sri Lanka and China, for example, people smile or laugh to hide feelings of embarrassment and awkwardness, which can be quite concerning to people from Western cultures. In comparing the attitude towards smiling between Americans and the Japanese, Americans smile to show success while the Japanese smile to cover negative feelings (Wierzbicka 1994). To Americans, smiles project a positive image, causing people to think something good about the smiler, and it expresses a person's conscious or semiconscious effort to get rid of bad feelings and to generate in oneself genuine good feelings (Wierzbicka 1994, p. 179). Given this, it could be argued, by applying Hofstede's theory, that American reasoning regarding smiling is projected towards individual gain; that is, 'I want to feel good'. The Japanese reason for smiling may be driven by the fact that the individual wants to hide negative emotions from others to keep group harmony and happiness; harmony within the group is important. For Hofstede (2001), national culture is the collective mental programming of a specific group of people associated with a particular geographic location; examples would include Ghanaian, Nigerian, South African, American, Australian, Indian and Sri Lankan culture.

In a service setting, smiling by customer service staff, such as receptionists, is expected to be spontaneous and genuine (Hochschild 1979). But, if smiling is not the appropriate emotion to welcome a guest in a particular culture, how can service providers be expected to convey it genuinely? Hotel and hospitality practitioners usually presume that smiling and other forms of emotions have the same meaning in every culture and that it is possible to train staff to display their emotions in a Western fashion. The cultural dimensions involved are often neglected; for example, when McDonald's first moved to Moscow, employees were instructed to smile at customers, in keeping with the McDonald's corporate style. But, Muscovite customers to whom smiling signified being smirked at, were offended (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993).

Drawing upon these kinds of differences, several researchers have pointed out that service personnel can have difficulties when the service culture conflicts with the national culture (Peiró & Kivimäki 2000; Sturdy 1998).

The above section has provided an insight into the concept of emotional labour. There are features and aspects of emotional labour that have been expressed by the receptionists interviewed in the current study. The next sections present the main findings of the receptionists' accounts of their reception experiences supplemented by the views of the managers.

8.5 Receptionist Experiences

The findings of this thesis are presented in Chapter Five and Chapter Six. However, there was an unexpected result during the fieldwork. Receptionists said their encounters with hotel guests can present challenges that can be stressful and undermine their motivation and threaten their ability to perform their job. The receptionists expressed, with a great deal of frustration, their experiences including; socio-cultural differences between them and the guests, the physical demands of the job of the receptionists and feelings they expected to portray as part of the requirement of the role.

8.5.1 Receptionists experiences of the co-created reception experiences - summary of findings

The hotel receptionist is a person hired to receive guests in the hotel's lobby. They are responsible for the reception operations at the front desk which include preparing for the arrival of guests, greeting and welcoming them, check-in and assigning guests their rooms, confirming guests' payment method, and dealing with group arrivals. They are also responsible for guests' urgent needs and queries. They keep records of the status of each room, take charge of the keys, and provide information about each room of the hotel (Baker, et al. 2000; Bardi 2007). The role of the reception is thus essential to guests' experiences.

As indicated in the previous chapter (Chapter 7, section 7.2.3, and section 7.3.2), the hotel reception experience is co-created between the receptionists and the guests. Managers and receptionists in this study put in considerable effort to co-create memorable experiences with guests. The co-creation of the experience takes the form of guests having warm face-to-face interactions with staff.

The findings indicate that the face-to-face contact of the receptionists with guests during the co-creation of the experience created challenges, such as cross-cultural misunderstandings.

Receptionists experiences in cross-cultural interactions

In this study, one of the main cross-cultural barriers and challenges almost all the receptionists reported they faced was their inability to understand the language of a significant minority of their guests. The respondents expressed how frustrating it was when interacting with guests. This situation, according to the respondents, not only frustrates them but the guests as well. They believe that in such instances, they are not able to meet all the needs of their guests, but they try to do their best. Some of them made comments such as;

"Language barriers is one of the challenges to me; some guests do not speak much English. I also do not seem to understand the accent of some guests, especially Americans (P3 R).

"... I feel sometimes it's the communication. If they are trying to tell you something and you don't get it, usually because of how they speak, they easily become impatient. And they feel you are treating other guests better than they are" (P6 R).

Having to deal with language barriers can be problematic, as it might create misunderstanding and dissatisfaction on both parties involved in the interaction. Once the guest is not satisfied, they may not want to come back to the hotel. The receptionist may also feel disappointed about not being able to meet the customer's needs. Such an encounter might have an overall implication on the guests' experiences.

Another challenge that a significant majority of the receptionists reported was their inability to interpret some of the gestures and body language displayed by their guests. The receptionists said this was due to the differences in the interpretations given to various body signs and languages in different cultures. This is problematic and causes a great deal of frustration for the receptionists. One of them expressed the above by stating that:

"... a Chinese point his left fingers at you when they are talking to you, which I find offensive as it is culturally not acceptable here in Ghana" (P37 R).

A guest may thus use specific body languages or signs which the receptionists may find offensive in their culture. Nevertheless, the receptionist mentioned that sometimes, some of their guests also find it frustrating and difficult to interpret some body language and signs they exhibit. Attempts to explain may add to the offence. These two scenarios can negatively impact the guests' experiences at the reception. A receptionist expressed this with a great deal of frustration in the vignette below:

"As a Ghanaian, and being brought up as a Ghanaian, greeting is very, very important regardless of age or whether you know the person. You meet a stranger, and you are expected to say hello. ... you greet some guests, foreign nationals and they don't even respond, they just pass and go. I feel offended ..." (P6 R).

According to an overwhelming majority of the receptionists, while they aimed at providing hospitable co-creation of experiences for all the guests, they also reported that they encountered 'hostile' experiences with some of their guests. A receptionist gave an example:

"I remember one time, a guest was telling me I am not fit to be called a human being, and I am the most useless person ever. And that person came in earlier than the expected time of check-in. So, I was going out of my way to assist him, and he thought it was his right to check in. But check-in is around 2 pm, so, I told him my peace of mind. "You are fortunate that you are a guest; you would have seen what I would have done to you today. Because do you know

who a useless person is?" He said, "No." Then I said, "he is a dead person." Then I gave him all his keys" (P38 R).

A significant majority of the receptionists identified disrespect from guests as one of the challenges they face. The receptionists said a minority of guests do not respect the rules of the hotel. Some guests disrespect the traditional values of Ghana. The receptionists also mentioned that certain guests from some countries are polite, and it is a joy interacting with them (for example, British and Americans). However, a large majority from certain noted countries were just too disrespectful and saw themselves as superior to everybody when they visited. And even when receptionists try to point some basic things to them for example, 'no smoking' in a 'non-smoking' area, the guest will even smoke more (P24 R). The receptionist explained by reference to values and respect for local culture.

"We sometimes find certain guests who will flout and think yes; because it's Ghana and so what? We have a law you cannot smoke in public, yet you see them smoking, ... the next time they're telling a lie about you because you stopped the person from smoking. If you ask a Ghanaian not to do this, of course, if the law is going to come after me, I won't do it. But people come, and they think they can flout the law. So as for cultural differences yes, we have a lot of people (guests) who find it very difficult to accept peoples (the Ghanaian)' cultures" (P24 R).

The receptionists further said, such guests, see themselves as superior, thinking that they have come to Ghana so they cannot be bothered and are above everything and everyone else. The receptionists said, whenever such guests visited the hotels, the receptionists would be friendly and welcoming, but the guests, for example, would never respond to the greetings. This behaviour worried the receptionists who were trying to be hospitable, particularly in a culture where 'greetings in very important (see Context Chapter Two, Section 2.3). These receptionists also believed that some guests are disrespectful to a particular gender (i.e., a reference to the overwhelming prevalence of women as reception staff).

All of the receptionists said that a few guests exhibited unfriendly demeanours and did not respect some cultural codes of conduct. And when the receptionist tried to draw the guest's attention to some acceptable values and norms of the hotels, the guests either became angry or took it in bad faith. All the Front Office Managers acknowledged that the receptionists indeed face several challenges at the reception since they are the first point of call, and they emphasised that, most of the difficulties are due to cultural differences.

This study also found that the majority of receptionists believed that certain guests from particular countries were rude, especially towards women. So, whenever a female receptionist had to serve such guests, it was a challenging task. One of the female respondents expressed the above and stated that;

“The type of guests I find challenging is Indians and some of the Arabs ... they are so difficult and demanding. I think it is a cultural difference. You know, Indians and Arabs ... their respect for women is low, and especially if what they want is not part of your standards and you want to insist that, they don’t understand why you, a woman is telling me I cannot have this,” (P5 R).

A few of the receptionists also believed that there existed male-dominant cultures. Therefore guests from such backgrounds disrespect female receptionists and become unreasonable in their demands when they were being served. Similarly, the receptionists also mentioned that some guests from certain religious backgrounds were also disrespectful to female receptionists. For example, few receptionists were frustrated by the assumptions made by a few guests about their behaviour and dress sense.

Further, a large number of receptionists said they were frustrated about having to continually handle guests who were hard to please. They added that such guests would complain about almost everything and deliberately abuse them emotionally. A few of the receptionists mentioned that there had been instances where such hard-to-please guests were uncontrollable to the point of verbally abusing the receptionists. The receptionists reported occasions, where guests could even make them feel worthless as one of them, said with a great deal of frustration:

“you feel that you have no sense of your own, nor you do not even deserve to be called a human being” (P38 R).

The receptionist said they had to endure all these challenges, which sometimes becomes so unbearable. The receptionists reported they feel burdened by the emotional demands of their job, which the next section discusses.

Receptionists experiences of the emotional demands of the co-created experiences

“I mean the truth hurts, but it has to be told. I tell them (the receptionists) don’t bring your emotions to work, leave it at the door and come to work. When you are done, you can put on your emotions, scream! But don’t bring your emotions here (P2 FOM).”

The quote above is from one of the Front office Managers on the appropriate emotions receptionists must bring to work. According to the receptionists, they are supposed to act in their role to satisfy their guests. For example, they are supposed to portray a feeling of cheerfulness at all times while, in reality, they might be unhappy on certain days and times, especially when faced with the numerous challenges they encounter at the reception.

The ways that they talked about this aspect of their work can be understood in terms of the concept of emotional labour. Emotional labour in the context of this study describes the management of feeling

by front desk staff to create a publicly visible facial and bodily display with a focus on showing appropriate organisationally desired emotions (Hochschild 1983). An in-depth discussion of this concept of emotional labour has been presented earlier in this chapter (see section 8.2).

One of the Front Office Receptionists expressed it thus:

“The job is too stressful, and it is not as rewarding as it seems. This job is emotional labour. The stress of carrying somebody’s emotional, mental burden – we cannot put a price tag on it. E.g., guest fight us, they yell at us, throw tantrums, they bang their hands on the table when they are angry.... There was a case in this hotel, that is why we are not allowed to wear hanging earrings but studs because a guest once got angry and pulled a staff’s earring off” (P19).

By contrast, a FOMs stated categorically that they (the managers) are very much aware of what the receptionists had to endure while at the line of duty. Still, since the receptionists are the first point of guest contact, managers expect them to act as if everything is going normal and they are poised to give guests what they want for repeat business. The FOM said:

“The front office is like a stage for acting when you leave every bad experience behind you to make the guest happy. This makes the front desk job very stressful” (P20, FOM).

While managers claim they understand the challenges receptionists encounter in the performance of their duties, the receptionists claim the opposite is the case. This mismatch in views between managers and receptionists is problematic in terms of devising coping strategies from the perspectives of the management of the hotel.

The findings of this study also indicate that a significant majority of respondents believed that ‘endurance’ is the only coping strategy they could adopt to manage the intense and effortful emotional labour required, and the numerous challenges they faced, on their job.

According to the receptionists, other challenges which compounded the difficulties involved in emotional labour relates to how stressful the job is, and staff turnover. Interestingly, regardless of the above challenges, it was found that the most prominent reason a significant majority of receptionists gave for choosing their job is their love of human interaction and enjoyment of serving. Although many receptionists expressed a great desire to work in the hospitality industry because of their love of people and culture, the way some guests treated them proved frustrating and demotivating. Several receptionists stated that, at some point, they planned to look for better opportunities and leave the industry.

The findings above brought to light an important new challenge. This challenge is the experiences of the receptionists as a result of co-creating the encounter. The question is:

How can the pressures faced by hotel receptionists be understood and addressed?

The subsequent section answers this question by presenting a detailed and theoretically informed discussion of the findings and their contribution to the hotel and tourism literature.

8.6 Applying the Emotional labour concept to the current study

In co-creating reception experiences, managers and guests expect receptionists to be pleasant and co-create 'service with a smile'. This expectation together with the demands of the job as a receptionist create a huge burden on the receptionists in which they have to hide their true feelings to make the guest satisfied. The ways that they (receptionists) talked about this aspect of their work can be understood in terms of the concept of *emotional labour*. (Emotional labour is defined as the management of feeling by front-line staff to create a publicly visible facial and bodily display with a focus on showing appropriate organisationally desired emotions (Hochschild 2012). This section discusses the interplay between co-creation and emotional labour in reception experiences.

8.6.1 How emotional labour as a concept relates to co-creation

The provision of quality guest experiences has been regarded as providing a competitive advantage in service organisations such as hotels. Hence, service businesses have placed considerable emphasis on the management of emotions of their frontline staff for co-creating "service with a smile" (Kim, et al. 2012, p. 1042). As one of the receptionist said;

"... you need to show up with smiles, even when within you, you know that things are not going on well for me, but you need to smile" (P26 R).

While managers formulate strategies and ensure that the guests have a memorable reception experience, this study found that managers demand certain behavioural attributes from the receptionists. Therefore, when employing people as receptionists, the managers look for certain desired qualities such as human relation skills, to be able to carry out the front office operations efficiently. As one of the front office managers said;

"We look for people with good appearance, good communication skills, a team player and a people's person. These are the first things I look at, and after that, we will continue with training" (P30 FOM).

The implication here is that for the managers to be able to achieve their objectives of co-creating desirable guest experiences it requires that receptionists be used as the medium for such interactions. Thus, the managers expect the receptionists to play a role of creating and maintaining a 'pleasant face and attitude' all the time regardless of how they truly feel when interacting with guests. This

requirement and effort have been referred to as emotional labour (Hochschild 2012). Emotional labour goes beyond just managing emotions but also includes making an effort to display organizationally desired emotions while serving others regardless of how the server feels. (Morris and Feldman, 1996) This is exactly the demand managers in this study placed on the receptionists as they perform their roles. Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) highlighted the fact that the adoption of emotional labour strategies in organizations is an attempt to impress clients, and that makes emotional labour central to impression management. It must be noted that though the managers made such demands on the receptionists, they were aware that such situations can be stressful to the receptionist as one front office manager stated;

“The front office is like a stage for acting when you leave every bad experience behind you to make the guest happy. This makes the front desk job very stressful”. (P20, FOM).

While managers may understand the stress that goes with the role, they nevertheless expect the reception staff to display pleasantness regardless of whether they felt the same or not. Managers hold two contradictory beliefs; First, the managers use the good impressions they want to have on their guests’ at the reception to explain away the likely stress the receptionists would experience in performing their role (Festinger 1957). Second, the managers expect that the receptionists are required to make guests satisfied by being pleasant in all situations at the expense of how receptionists truly feel. This situation of the managers could be described as *cognitive dissonance* (Festinger 1957). Cognitive dissonance describes a physiological state of mind with two competing thoughts, one which is consistent and another which is inconsistent (Festinger 1957). “The inconsistent condition motivates one to remove the adverse condition to regain cognitive balance” (Chhetri, Adikarib, Nguyen, & Alahakoond 2019, p. 28).

Receptionists are required to display organisational desired rules regardless of how they feel. This situation creates a form of emotional dissonance for the receptionist (Zapf, Seifert, Schmutte, Mertini, & Holz 2001). “Emotional dissonance defined as the requirement to display emotions which are not felt which is the most stressful aspect of emotion work” (Zapf, et al. 2001, p. 542). The receptionists are always mandated to display pleasantness and friendliness regardless of how they feel.

On the part of the receptionists, there was evidence of cognitive dissonance. All of them knew that their job is stressful and that they can even be abused at times, yet they were still in their roles. When asked about their intentions to stay or leave about one-third of them said they enjoy their work and will stay on. One justification for staying in a stressful position is the fact that they were in a developing economy, where getting a job or position is relatively difficult compared to others with similar qualifications from a developed economy. It is, therefore, not uncommon to find people occupying very stressful positions, with unfavourable work ethics and conditions. Yet, people still stay on the job

with reasons for unavailability of jobs elsewhere, a case of cognitive dissonance. However, long stay in an intensely stressful job can lead to frustration and burnout, which will negatively impact management goals such as positive interactions with guests and successful overall co-creation of guest reception experiences.

Although many of these receptionists expressed a great desire to work in the hospitality industry and had a love of people and culture, this study found that the way the guests treated some of them was frustrating and demotivating. A receptionist expressed this sentiment by saying;

“The most challenging aspect of it will be trying hard to satisfy a guest who doesn’t seem to be satisfied with everything you do. We are all human, we all have emotions, sometimes, and it demands that you’re still polite no matter what, so even if I feel hurt and angry, I am not supposed to show it. That’s a bit challenging, unlike the guests where he can vent out his anger at you if he’s unsatisfied. Sometimes you just feel you are right just let the customer feel he’s right and you feel the pain” (P6 R).

The findings suggested that guests and staff come to the reception encounter with expectations. These expectations form the basis of the services hotel staff render, whereas, for the guest, they determine the kind of experiences they expect to receive. The guests compare their expectations with the services they receive and rate their overall reception experiences. For the receptionist, they were either motivated to stay on the job or find another position within their organisation or intend to move out of the industry entirely (Ariffin & Maghzi 2012; Walls, Okumus, Wang & Kwun 2011)

In co-creating, the reception experiences receptionist engages in surface acting to satisfy their guests. This can result in emotional dissonance (Newnham 2017). Such surface acting has been found to relate to several other organizationally undesirable variables such as job dissatisfaction, burnouts and intention to leave (Hwa 2012; Kruml & Geddes 2000; Lv, Xu, & Ji 2012). Little reference has been made in the emotional labour literature to this aspect of the kind of emotional labour placed on individuals in the service sector of developing economies (Newnham 2017).

Although emotional labour has been found to relate to several organizationally undesirable variables, the managers in this study persist in requiring it from staff. Guests are largely unaware of the pressures faced by the receptionists. The majority of the guests (92%) stated that their expectations were either met or exceeded, meaning the emotional labour strategy is attaining the desired goals set by the managers. This finding is in agreement with Ashforth and Humphrey (1993) suggestion that as a means of presenting a positive image of the organization and inducing the appropriate feelings in guests, managing emotions may result in good guest service performance. An emotional expression, such as smiles and friendly comments, can lead to good work. By extension Hochschild (2012) suggested that in the service industry, such as hotels, managing emotions (showing happiness and empathy, not fear

or anger) is an important facet of maintaining loyal guests and repeat business. It therefore not surprising that the majority of the guest, (over 70%) in this study are repeat guest.

Guests vary in socio-demographic characteristics and emotional needs. Receptionists who deal with many individuals with different emotional needs and concerns will be required to manage their emotions more frequently to suit specific situations. This study suggests that different emotional needs of different guests impact the emotional labour of the receptionists (Amissah, Blankson-Stiles-Okran, & Opoku Mensah 2019; Grandey 2000). The justification is that when receptionists interact with more guests over time, they need to express a variety of emotions within a short time interval. Receptionists, for example, may experience both positive and negative emotions like anger, happiness, frustration, optimism and hostility when checking in groups of guests (Amissah, et al. 2019). Therefore, the higher the variety of display, the higher the emotional labour and the lower the variety of display, the lower the emotional labour of the receptionists (Amissah, et al. 2019; Grandey 2000).

According to the receptionists, other challenges which contributed to emotional labour relate to the physical pressures of the job and the rate of staff turnover. One of the challenges mentioned by many receptionists was the inadequate numbers of reception staff and the long hours of standing on their feet. They explained that due to the insufficient staff, sometimes they had to work longer hours than expected with the same pay. This finding is consistent with the work of Yang, et al. (2019) who found that emotional labour is affected by the workload.

In a developing country, Ghana, power inequalities between the receptionists and the managers potentially made the emotional labour of the receptionists worse. Power inequalities have been referred to as power distance by Hofstede (2001). Ghana, as a broadly collectivist nation and culture, has been identified and classified as having a high-power distance (Hofstede 2001; Triandis 2001). In such high power distance economies, individuals conform more and are less independent (Doney, Cannon, & Mullen 1998) and, as subordinates, expect to be told what to do (Hofstede 2001). In such conditions, there is strict obedience to authority, submission to power and respect for the powerful (Triandis 2001). As a consequence, it is easier for the managers to instruct the receptionists to surface act pleasantness than it would be in a culture with less power distance. Beyond inequalities between managers and reception staff, there were also wealth and cultural inequalities between the receptionists and the guests. For example, a manager asking the receptionists not to bring their emotions to work.

In chapter Seven (see Chapter 7, section 7.3) it was noted that the receptionists were overqualified for their job yet their monthly salaries are less than the hotel room rate per night. The receptionists said their job was not rewarding vis a vis the emotional burden placed on receptionists. One of the receptionists said:

“... challenging in the sense where I come to work, and I need to make sure that the guest has a hassle-free stay in my hotel. And even when I need to show up with smiles, even when I know that it is not going on well for me; there is no money in my pocket, but I need to smile (P26 R).

In addition, there are certain traditional elements within the study context (refer to Chapter Two, Section 2.3, and Chapter Five, Section 5.2.2.2) which also is an added layer of emotional labour by the receptionists. As a cultural norm, Ghanaians would rather project a feeling of pleasantness to the guests or visitors regardless of how the host might be feeling (Dull 2004; Frempong & Deichmann 2017; Global Affairs Canada 2018).

Studies suggest demographics such as gender and age also impact emotional labour (Amissah, et al. 2019). While the receptionists were predominantly females (over 70 %, See Chapter Five, Section 5.11.), a minority of managers employ females because they believe females have a flair for guest interactions and perform well at the front office. Studies suggest that gender has an impact on emotional labour (Amissah, et al. 2019), and males tend to use more surface acting than their female counterparts. The reason is that males are less able to manage their feelings compared to females. A gender stereotype for women is that they perform emotional labour more than males since females are considered to be more expressive (Amissah, et al. 2019; Cheung & Tang 2010). An earlier study found a majority of the women work in high emotional labour demands occupations, whereas fewer men work in such occupations. This suggesting that men are less employed in high emotional labour demands jobs as compared to women (Bhave & Glomb 2009).

In this study, the emotional labour of receptionists appears to have had positive results on guest-reception interactions and co-created memorable experiences for guests. But co-creation comes with costs: receptionists experience cognitive dissonance; individuals and the organisation suffer.

Weiss and Cropanzano (1996) argue that when staff experience high negative emotions over a protracted period, they become frustrated, burn out and leave the organization entirely. Or, most of their actions become affectively driven as they let out how they feel about their clients. Thus, once an individual is stressed, communication can be negatively affected as stressful feelings and feelings of frustration can be vented on unsuspecting, and even innocent, individuals. Communication underlies all forms of human interaction and the resultant co-created experiences. Therefore, if communication is negatively affected, it can produce a chain reaction that affects ensuing interactions and the co-created experience can end badly. For instance, one receptionist described the following encounter with a guest:

“I remember one time, a guest was telling me I am not fit to be called a human being, and I am the most useless person ever. And that person came in earlier than the expected time of check-in. So, I was going out of my way to assist

him, and he thought it was his right to check in. But check-in is around 2 pm, so, I told him my peace of mind. "You are fortunate that you are a guest; you would have seen what I would have done to you today. Because do you know who a useless person is?" He said, "No." Then I said, "he is a dead person." Then I gave him all his keys" (P38 R)

While such an event is an example of co-creation, the outcome is a negative one. An outburst from the receptionists could be due to the protracted nature, or accumulation, of unexpressed stress leading to negative co-creation. According to Yang, et al. (2019), an unfriendly attitude of a customer is more likely to inflame conflict. This study establishes that emotional labour can also produce negative co-creation.

The above incident (quote from P38 R) could be described as an emotional event for the receptionist. Emotive events are determinants of emotional labour in hospitality. Emotional events are circumstances that call for instant emotional regulation to be able to perform emotional labour (Frijda 1986; Grandey 2000). In this case, it is a hassle to the receptionist because it is negative (hassles are minor events that reflect irritating, frustrating and distressing demands in everyday interaction, see section 8.5.2).

According to previous research, once receptionists get to the point of overloaded, their job satisfaction is negatively impacted and their intention to leave is heightened (Grandey 2000; Weiss & Cropanzano 1996). In this study, one-third of the receptionists indicated that they would abandon their profession as a receptionist in the near future. This is in accord with research that excessive emotional labour is related to undesirable organizational variables such as burnout, frustrations, withdrawal behaviour, absenteeism and intention to leave (Grandey 2000; Weiss & Cropanzano 1996). A receptionist who indicated that she would like to leave her job in the future said:

"....it is very demanding even though you get satisfied, but you will also want to have a life. Somebody will say, "does it mean you don't have a life"? But a time will come you might not have all the patience to do that you will surely, probably will also want to go" (P26 R)

But there are positive descriptions of emotional labour. Some of the receptionists described the joy they receive from helping the guests. This group of receptionists indicated that though their job is stressful, they would still stay on regardless. One of them stated the above by saying that;

"I feel customer service does not end. It's a life something, and it keeps you going, and for now, I think I can still bear the screams and shouting of the customers" (P16 R).

The two-thirds of the respondents who felt they could continue in their jobs indicated that they consider customer service as something lifelong. Presumably, these receptionists might have some job satisfaction despite the emotional labour of their role. Job satisfaction is a measure of the staff's

evaluation of the job and has often been used as a proxy for staff well-being at work. Some researchers have suggested that being required to be friendly to guests may make a monotonous job more fun, or may allow self-expression that is enjoyable to staff (Ashforth & Humphrey 1993).

The findings of this current study also indicate that a significant majority of respondents were of the view that 'endurance' is a principal coping strategy they adopt to manage the emotional labour and the numerous challenges they faced on their job. But, at the organisational level managers have the potential to support their front office staff and create safer workplaces. Apart from training, supervising and equipping the receptionists to do their job, managers said it is their practice to join with receptionists in co-creating experiences. A manager said:

"I believe leadership is to serve so, I sometimes check-in guest, do airport drop off, I carry luggage and do all the other duties of the front office staff. (P30, FOM).

Support from managers and co-receptionists could both alleviate pressures and, so, significantly affect service interactions as well as helping to create a positive working environment for receptionists (Abugre 2012). For example, Abugre (2012) found that regular interactions between managers and staff have a direct positive effect on staff work output. When staff perceive that they work in a supportive environment it is beneficial in many ways. Social support helps staff to improve their work skills and performance, get job satisfaction, lower stress, and turnover intentions, and even increase team performance (Howes, et al. 2000; Kahn, et al. 2006; Schaufeli & Bakker 2004; Zhong, et al. 2016). In guest experience organisations, where positive expressions are expected, feeling positive about the social environment may mean that less emotional labour is required by individuals. A staff member may genuinely feel the emotions that are expected in a service environment if the interpersonal relationships are positive and supportive. Indirectly, social support may help staff cope with the stress of service jobs (Grandey 2000).

There is tension in the above discussions between the managers in this study and the receptionists. Whereas the managers may be enjoying success with regards to combining impression management and emotional labour as strategies to satisfy their guests, about one-third of their receptionists have intentions to quit without them knowing. This tension can have a negative impact on reception operations. There could be an exodus of receptionists when least expected, meaning managers must use resources to hire and train new staff which could drain their financial resources and also potentially increase the stress on the remaining receptionists. And, as indicated earlier, protracted emotional labour can produce negative co-creation which can affect the overall image of the hotel in the long run, something managers work to avoid.

Apart from the job of the receptionist being described as inherently being a form of emotional labour, the receptionist also faces other challenges which might worsen the negative impact of the emotional labour. In this study receptionists and managers planned and put strategies in place for guests to have memorable experiences, but the receptionists still encounter negative experiences relatively frequently. In terms of the co-creation of this particular service economy experience, staff apportion responsibility for unsuccessful reception experiences mostly on the type of guest and such guests' lack of understanding of what is needed for successful co-creation. Despite some guests being unfriendly (hostile), the results nevertheless showed that the majority of the receptionists remained in their job because they loved interacting with people. This enabled them to learn about different cultures, and they understood better how to serve the guests.

8.7 Conclusion

Overall, the discussion presented in this chapter describes the unexpected findings concerning the effect of emotional labour on the co-creation of the reception experience. The main aim of this study has been to explore the hotel reception experience in a developing country context of Ghana from the perspective of guests, staff and managers, recognising that these experiences are co-created in a particular context. What these results signify is that this multiple-layered context has a major impact on the experience of emotional labour by hotel receptionists.

In this study, receptionists planned and put strategies in place for guests to have memorable experiences, but the receptionists still encountered experiences relatively frequently, which were not intended for the guests or themselves. That is, receptionists reported encountering negative experiences from the guests they serve. In terms of the co-creation of this particular service economy experience, staff apportion responsibility for unsuccessful reception experiences mostly on the type of guest and such guests' lack of understanding of what is needed for successful co-creation.

Despite some guests being unfriendly (hostile), the results nevertheless showed the majority of the receptionists remained in their job because they loved interacting with people. This interaction enabled them to learn about different cultures, and they understood better how to serve the guests. Nevertheless, although many of these receptionists expressed a great desire to work in the hospitality industry and the love of people and culture, this study found that the way the guests treated some of them was frustrating and demotivating. The negative experiences of receptionists intensify the emotional labour required which may mean that, at some point in time, they will leave the industry for other opportunities.

Considering the negative impact of emotional labour on the wellbeing of staff and the co-creation of reception experiences for the guest it is time managers take the necessary steps to alleviate these

negative impact of emotional labour. The question is, do Managers have the needed skills to support their staff in managing the excessive stress posed by emotional labour?

The next chapter provides a discussion of the overall contribution of this study to hospitality and tourism research. The theoretical and practical implications and limitations of the study are also presented and suggestions are made for further research.

Chapter 9

Thesis Contribution, Limitation and Implications

9.1 Introduction

Memorable hotel reception experiences are critical to the success of the hotel industry. Well-managed and co-created experiences benefit a hotel, the hotel industry, and enhance a country's viability as a tourist destination. These benefits are made possible through repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendations. This study is the first study of hotel reception experiences from the developing economy perspective of Ghana. Another original aspect of the study is the use of the theories of the experience economy, co-creation, and servicescapes to study hotel reception experiences. Most studies relating to hotels do not look concurrently at suppliers and consumers (demand and supply-side) perspectives. This study has also bridged a gap in the literature by integrating guests', receptionists', and managers' perspectives.

9.1.1 Original research questions

This study used a mixed-method, qualitative and quantitative approach to assess hotel reception experiences. The aim of this study was to explore the hotel reception experience and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in this experience within a developing economy's (Ghana) context. Four research questions were asked to address the aim of this study:

1. a) What are the key elements of the hotel reception experience?

b) In what ways does the developing country context impact these elements?
2. What are the expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience by different stakeholders (guests, staff, and managers)?
3. How do the different characteristics of key stakeholders influence their expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience (for example, culture, age, gender, and travel experience)?
4. What impact do hotel characteristics have on the expectations and experiences of the hotel reception?

9.1.2 Disruption and a new question

The interviews with receptionists and managers brought to light an important new challenge which posed a new question:

5. How can the pressures faced by hotel receptionists be understood and addressed?

The search for a new body of theory to address these challenges was described in Chapter Eight. The concept of emotional labour was introduced and linked to the co-creation of experience. The findings were presented in Chapter Eight (section 8.5).

This chapter proceeds in two sections: Section 9.2 provides answers to the research questions, which are the contributions of this study to the field of hospitality and tourism. Section 9.3 answers the research question that was posed as a result of the unexpected findings of the study.

Furthermore, the chapter discusses the theoretical and practical implications that arise from the account of the reception experience presented in this study. It also acknowledges the limitations of the study and makes suggestions for future research.

9.2 Research contributions

The concepts of the experience economy, servicescape, and co-creation have been widely researched across tourism and hospitality (e.g., Chathoth, et al. 2013; Harkison 2017, 2018). Nevertheless, there has to date been limited application of these theories to the hotel reception experience. In particular, these three theories have not been used in combination to study hotel reception experiences, particularly within a developing country context. Such a context was thought to be likely to reveal new insights into how processes of co-creation interact with servicescapes and the broader experience economy. From a theoretical stance, therefore, this study contributes by examining the applicability and interrelationships of the three theories in understanding the hotel reception experience. A further significant contribution arose as a result of the unexpected findings. This contribution involved identifying and incorporating the notion of emotional labour as a central element in these experiences, especially as it emerges in a developing country context. The findings of this thesis have implications and relevance not only for Ghana but also for Africa and other developing countries.

Four main research questions were developed to explore the role of the reception experience in the context of these theoretical perspectives. This section discusses what has been found in relation to each of the research questions that guided the study.

Research questions 1a: What are the key elements of the hotel reception experience?

This study explored three key aspects of the hotel reception experiences: experiential services (experience economy), co-creation of the reception experience, and servicescapes (the front office setting). The findings reveal that guests, receptionists, and managers perceive the most important element of the hotel reception experience's co-creation is the 'human face' to the experience. This face-to-face experience can be seen as partially dependent upon, and even partly constitutive of, the servicescape (in the sense of a 'social servicescape'). The local hospitality experience also shapes this human interaction (see the next section, which discusses findings related to research question 1b, for further details). In this interaction, communication in all forms (verbal, written and visual) plays a critical role. When communication goes wrong at any stage of the interaction, the outcome of the experience can be adversely affected.

The literature from developed countries has emphasized the importance of human interactions, that is the interaction between staff and guest, and guest-to guest as being critical to the co-creation of experiences (Vittersø, Prebensen, Hetland, & Dahl, 2017; Padma, & Ahn, 2020). This is not different from the developing nations as indicated earlier; however, the context presents certain characteristics, which impact on the experience (see research question 1b in the next section).

Research questions 1b: In what ways does the developing country context impact on these elements?

The reception experience is pivotal to the success of the hotel and hospitality sector. The reception is the first point of encounter between a guest and the staff, where initial impressions are formed. The experience is co-created at the reception where cultural exchanges take place. It serves as a communication and information hub for guests.

The findings of this study reveal that in the developing country context, it is vital to consider in detail the characteristics of the reception experience. As a destination, Ghana has a rich culture that influences the design of the front office servicescapes. It also influences the co-creation of the experience (through cultural norms and expectations about them) and the perception of the reception experience by the stakeholders.

A significant majority of the receptionists in this study were Ghanaians (95%) who were educated in Ghana. Receptionists and managers mentioned their values, norms, and attitudes to service are shaped by the standards of the developing country. The particular cultural context has impacts on their interactions and, therefore, upon the reception experiences. For example, the receptionists co-create the renowned local hospitable experiences with the guests. In co-creating, local norms of hospitality gained from the receptionists' Ghanaian upbringing play a critical role in the way they

receive guests. The study found that this local form of hospitality enhances the reception experience and the guest's overall satisfaction. However, it also adds a dimension to the experienced intensity of emotional labour for the receptionists, since those cultural norms provide added expectations of positive service experiences.

This context of Ghana presents issues of inequalities between the guests and staff. Guests typically have a relatively high income, while staff are well educated but are less well off than guests. This contrasts with the developed world where there are relatively lower levels of inequality and power relationship between people. These differences between the guests and staff may affect staff motivation and job satisfaction and consequently impact the way they co-create the reception service experience guests.

In this study, top management positions were occupied by migrants which may indicate that Ghanaians find it difficult getting to management positions in the hotel industry. Generally, developing economies face challenges as a result of tourism development in which local people, as in this case, are often highly (over) qualified yet tend to occupy unskilled service and low paying positions, such as waiters, porters and security guards. By contrast, the highly paid job positions, such as supervisory and managerial positions, are occupied by migrants (Akama & Kieti 2007; Ashley, et al. 2000; Scheyvens 2002). Mbaiwa (2005) is of a similar opinion that tourism can serve as a form of internal colonialism where tourism resources in a community benefit foreigners as compared to the majority of their local community counterparts who derive insignificant or no benefit.

At the front office, the receptionists bring their norms and values and are expected to interact with guests from varied socio-cultural backgrounds to co-create the desired by the hotel management–guest experiences. During the interaction, cultural differences became apparent. These include language barriers and differences in interpretations of body language and signs. Also, gender differences played an important role in some interactions, especially when guests were from male-dominant cultures or expressed differences in religious norms and beliefs.

The destination context also has a role in the employment of receptionists. A large majority of managers of domestic branded hotels were obliged to employ only Ghanaians as receptionists because they managed a local branded hotel and, therefore, receptionists had to be locals as a matter of their hotel policy. Other managers said they hire locals because they were aware of the high graduate unemployment situation in Ghana. A few managers said they employed local receptionists because of the high cost of hiring migrant receptionists. Other managers said that a migrant receptionist would receive higher pay than a local receptionist of the same rank. Having a higher number of local receptionists requires a particularly nuanced understanding of cross-cultural relations, which is key to

the human interactions at the front desk. When front office staff are knowledgeable about their guest culture they succeed in co-creating the experience better (Nacéra, 2018).

Research question 2: What are the expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience by different stakeholders (guests, staff, and managers)?

The stakeholders in this study are guests, receptionists and managers. Guests' participation in this study is essential because they are the consumers and active participants in the experience (Morgan, et al. 2009). The receptionist co-creates the experience with the guests, which, according to Pine and Gilmore (1999), represents the *performance*. Front Office Managers were included in the study because they oversee the general administration of the department which includes selection, training and supervision of staff (receptionists) (Baker, et al. 2000; Bardi 2007). They, therefore, have a role to play in the broader process of co-creation of the reception experience (see Chapter 4 section 4.3.1 for details).

Stakeholders' Expectations

This study identified four main types of pre-arrival expectations; human interactions, staff attributes, the hotel reception service, and the servicescape ambience. While stakeholders ranked all the aspects of the reception experience as important in their expectations, aspects contributing to guests' face-to-face interactions (co-creation) with the receptionist were ranked as being the most important. In co-creating service experiences, both guests' and staff's role in the interaction is important (Gronroos 1985; Grove, et al. 1992; Lin, et al. 2020; Parasuraman, et al. 1985; Sthapit, et al. 2020). Staff and guests interact with or within a service organisation and its corresponding servicescape to generate their own experience. They bring their understanding of the situation, based on pre-existing expectations, attitudes, and beliefs, which relate to their motives and culture (Payne, et al. 2009; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2003).

It is not surprising that guests and receptionists (and their managers) perceive human interactions to be important to the reception experience. A majority of the receptionists chose their job because they love human interactions. According to the receptionists, interacting with guests helped them to learn new and different things about other cultures, including new languages and behaviours.

The study highlights the importance of staff characteristics, which is understandable given the link between face-to-face interaction (co-creation) and staff attributes. Examples of staff attributes are friendliness, courtesy, politeness, a welcoming manner, professionalism, and the ability to discern and understand guests' special requirements during check-ins. Given this, managers look for the requisite

skills in their receptionists before employing them. The managers give their receptionists regular training to instil or refine these skills to co-create memorable guest experiences.

The results also show that guests expected a high level of service at the hotel reception. This reception service includes accurate records of the guest's booking, a fast and efficient check-in, hospitality, good facilities and system operation, professional services, adequate information about the hotel and the destination, personalised service, and security.

The Hotel General Managers and Front Office Managers also have expectations of the experience. The Managers' expectations are geared towards giving memorable guest experiences to encourage return business. This drives their practices regarding recruitment and training and the expectations they place on their staff regarding their overall reception role (behaviours and attitudes). Managers expect the receptionist to provide their best efforts for guests. They stated that they train reception staff, provide resources, and motivate them to co-create the expected service. The stakeholders in this study have different characteristics which they bring to the encounter. These characteristics influence the hotel reception experiences.

Stakeholders' Experiences

After the guests had arrived at the front office and were checked in, they evaluated the performance of the services of the reception based on the interaction. This study shows that guest experiences generally matched expectations, except in a few cases where it was reported that their reception expectations were not met. For example, guests were highly satisfied with their face-to-face interactions with the receptionists during check-ins and staff performance at the reception desk. Guests appreciated the welcoming and friendly attitude of the reception staff, their pleasant personality and professionalism. The guests were asked to rate their overall experiences in one of three ways; below expectation, same as expected, and above expectation. A greater majority of guests judged the reception experience as expected or better than expected. By contrast, when receptionists shared their experiences, it became clear that, at times, there were high emotional costs for them (see section 9.3 for further details).

Research question 3: How do the different characteristics of key stakeholders influence their expectations and perceptions of the hotel reception experience (for example, culture, age, gender, and travel experience)?

This study's findings show that receptionists and managers come into the reception experience with expectations about the guests. The receptionists mentioned five main categories of guest and what the receptionist believe are their demands. Receptionists form their expectations based on these categories of guests and, on that basis, tailor their services to enhance the guest experience. These

categories include; guests' purpose of travel, age, gender, travel experience, and nationality. The category of guests determines the kind of interactions required at the reception desk. For example, according to the receptionists, there are two categories of guests in relation to the purpose of travel: business and/ leisure guests. There are differences in the expectations and experiences of leisure and business guests. The study found that business guests mostly expect fast check-ins, access to internet connectivity whilst checking in, and mostly request rooms in quiet locations; they want less interaction than do other guests but, nevertheless, excellent service.

The results of the quantitative analysis of the guest surveys found no clear patterns linking guest pre-arrival expectations to such characteristics in terms of socio-demographic characteristics.

Research question 4: What impact do hotel characteristics have on expectations and experiences of the hotel reception?

The two main categories of hotels used for this study were domestic branded hotels and international branded hotels. International hotels in Ghana were either owned by foreigners or a franchise while the domestic branded hotels were locally owned and managed.

The expectations guests had of experiences in domestic hotels, and international hotels differed. Guests who stayed at domestic hotels had an added—or increased—expectation of a cultural element in the reception experience. Domestic guests from Ghana and other African countries felt 'at home' in the setting, and international guests experienced the destination's culture. In general, cultural factors were expected primarily in the servicescape elements of the hotel, including cultural artefacts located in the reception area. These artefacts carry messages and meanings about the destination's history, values, and unique identity. In this study, domestic hotels were more likely to display these cultural elements, although guests staying at international hotels also reported appreciating cultural elements.

By contrast, international hotels' front offices were designed to reflect the international hotel chains or franchise (such as Accor, or Inter-Continental Hotels Group) to align with each brand's worldwide standards. However, a few of these internationally branded hotels had Ghanaian artefacts, signs and symbols in their servicescapes to complement their reception design.

The study also found staff appearance to be an important part of this cultural experience, supplementing and supporting the servicescape. However, unlike international hotels, the staff in domestic hotels wore only African or Ghanaian branded uniforms made from Ghanaian fabrics.

Apart from the above, there were other elements within the servicescapes of the international hotels, such as music, lighting levels, the blend of colour shades, and temperature, which the managers and the receptionists believed to enhance guest experiences. One other distinction between the locally-

branded and international hotels was the choice and selection of music. In the front office of international hotels, one hears non-Ghanaian music playing at a certain minimal volume but still audible. Unlike the international hotels, the locally-branded hotels' managers specifically mentioned that they only play local music at the reception, and they even organise local live bands for their guests at certain times.

The findings show some significant commonalities and prominent differences between the hotels' intentions and focus in this study. Whereas the international hotels sought to maintain and promote their brand and the global or multinational culture of their hotels worldwide (while incorporating minimal cultural references), the locally-branded hotels aim at showcasing the local traditions and culture.

Research question 5: how can the pressures faced by hotel receptionists, be understood and addressed?

The study found that considerable emotional labour, on the part of reception staff, was required to co-create the reception experience. According to the receptionists, they often have to hide their true feelings, and express feelings that managers think will satisfy guests. Receptionists hiding their emotions is the requirement of the hotel to impress guests. The receptionists reported this emotional regulation was very stressful for them. The intensity of this emotional labour is a result of multiple layers of power inequalities (e.g., gender, organisational status, race and culture) between receptionists, their managers, and the guests. It is amplified by the contexts of the service setting and the broader context of Ghanaian cultural norms.

These forces include inequalities in power between managers and receptionists and between guests and receptionists. In a collectivist nation and culture, there is a high power distance (Hofstede 2001; Triandis 2001) between managers and receptionists. In such a context, managers find it easier to instruct the receptionists to surface act pleasantness than it would be in a culture with less power distance. Added to that are wealth and cultural inequalities between the receptionists and the guests. According to a significant majority of the receptionists, their job was not always rewarding compared to the emotional burden placed on them.

The reception role's gendered nature is an aspect of the cultural difference between the largely Ghanaian (female) receptionists and guests from other countries. In this study, a large majority of receptionists were females while the majority of guests were males. Given the co-creation nature of the experience, the receptionists formed a social dimension of the servicescapes. Their interactions created an added pressure, particularly when receptionists had to serve male guests from male-dominated cultures.

Ghana's particular cultural norms highlight 'friendliness' and so exert both pressures on the Ghanaian receptionists to perform to those norms and enhance guests' experiences (and possibly managers, too). Though emotional management is required by the frontline jobs in developed economies the study has also highlighted that the developing country context creates an layering of additional pressures for increased emotional labour.

The varied socio-demographic characteristics of guests mean differences in emotional needs. Receptionists are therefore required to manage their emotions more frequently to suit specific situations. In such situations receptionists need to manage a variety of emotions within a short time interval, for example, anger, happiness, frustration, optimism and hostility when checking in groups of guests (Amissah, et al. 2019). This situation becomes an added pressure on the emotions of receptions.

The physical pressures of the job and the rate of staff turnover created an added stress for receptionists. One of the challenges mentioned by many receptionists was the inadequate numbers of reception staff and the long hours of standing on their feet. They explained that sometimes they had to work longer hours than expected with the same payment due to the insufficient staff. When emotionally taxing interactions happened, therefore, it often occurred at times of overwork.

Receptionists and managers planned and put strategies in place for guests to have memorable experiences. However, the receptionists still had relatively frequent experiences that were not intended by them and were often negative. That is, receptionists reported encountering hostile attitudes from the guests they serve. In terms of the co-creation of this particular service economy experience, staff apportion responsibility for unsuccessful reception experiences mostly on the type of guest and such guests' lack of understanding of what is needed for successful co-creation. Despite some guests being unfriendly (hostile), the results nevertheless showed that the majority of the receptionists remained in their job because they loved interacting with people. This enabled them to learn about different cultures, and they understood better how to serve the guests. Many of the receptionists expressed a great desire to work in the hospitality industry and the love of people and culture. Nevertheless, this study found that the way some of them were treated by the guests was frustrating and demotivating; it may mean that at some point, they would choose to leave the industry.

9.3 Limitations of the study

A number of limitations have been identified to include in the sequence of data collection and the sample.

Given the nature of the sample, the detailed findings cannot be extrapolated beyond the relatively specific context. For example, there is only one five star domestic hotel in the study and, therefore, in commenting on it, reference is only to that one hotel and so it cannot be assumed that findings would

be the same for all five-star hotels. A better spread across all the star ratings would have provided more surety in interpreting the findings.

Due to resource constraints, the study was conducted in hotels within the central business district of Accra, which has a business clientele. This study therefore does not represent the whole of Ghana which might have particular cultural differences. It could have been extended to other parts of Accra or other regions, where other guests, travelling for other purposes, might have been involved. Also, further studies could explore reception experiences in other types of accommodation facilities such as Airbnb, guest houses and one-star to two-star hotels. In particular, the cultural context may have quite different effects in markedly different accommodation settings (e.g., because of closer contact between guests and accommodation owners).

A more specific limitation concerns the guest questionnaire. Guests were asked about their pre-arrival expectations after they had received the check-in service. Their judgement of the overall experience might have influenced their expectation. A better option could have been to ask for guest expectations before arrival at the front desk. In this case, the data depicting the reception expectations should have been completed through the survey before the guest had an actual reception experience with the hotels. This would have ensured the collection of data was free of bias since the expectations projected would not have interfered with the actual experienced perceptions during the current visit. Measuring guest expectations before the actual experiences would help to improve the accuracy of the data obtained.

The current study has a number of both practical and theoretical implications for the hotel and tourism industry which are discussed next.

9.4 Implications of the study

This study contributes to the literature of hotel reception experiences in the context of hotel accommodation in a developing economy (Ghana), with practical and theoretical implications for both developing and developed nations globally. This section discusses the implications of the current study in terms of theory and practice.

9.4.1 Theoretical Implications

This study's significant contribution is its investigation into a relatively understudied area in hospitality by focusing on the 'hotel reception' aspect of service experiences. The findings add to the currently limited literature on hotel reception experiences. This study has confirmed many of the previously found features of the experience and that the study also successfully combined the three theoretical perspectives. Further, this study is unique in using the three theories of the experience economy, co-creation, and servicescapes to study hotel reception experiences. The focus on experiences in an

experience economy, in this particular context, leads to an emphasis on preparing a servicescape that is often highly culturally informed to address the cross-cultural nature of the typical encounter. As part of this preparation, staff become fully incorporated into such preparations to provide the basis for the co-creation of a positive and satisfying guest experience.

A major contribution of this study to the hotel research that in some ways follows from this incorporation of staff into the culturally-mediated setting of the hotel reception is that the staff required a significant amount of emotional management in their interaction with guests in co-creating the hotel reception experience. These experiences of receptionists in their role have been theorised, in this study, in the context of emotional labour. The study found that the context (developing economy, cultural context, gendered nature of the work, work demand of managers, and demands of the job) has a profound impact on the experience and degree of emotional labour. This complex nature (and severity) of the emotional labour encountered through the study led to negative co-creation of the reception experiences for some of the guests. The emotional labour led to severe stress, lack of job satisfaction, and lack of motivation on the part of the staff. The negative experiences of receptionists intensify the emotional labour required which may mean that, at some point in time, they will leave the industry for other opportunities.

Regarding the geographical context, this study has enriched the body of literature by providing a better understanding of hotel reception experiences in a developing economy and, even more specifically, a developing African economy. The existing literature has been mainly concerned with tourism and hospitality experience offerings in Western and more developed countries. Therefore, this study provides a space for theoretical discussions related to hotel reception experiences from the Ghanaian and, in a broader sense, African perspective.

From a methodological perspective, this study provides a deeper understanding of hotel reception experiences from the simultaneous perspectives of hotel guests', receptionists, and managers. This has allowed the identification of inconsistencies in perceptions as well as insight into how these perspectives combine to generate the experiences. This was, in part, facilitated by the fact that the data were collected through interviews and surveys with open-ended questions; in this case, participants were not restricted to pre-determined closed-ended questions. This choice of multiple methods is useful to provide a better opportunity to answer the research questions and to evaluate better the extent to which the research findings can be trusted and inferences made from them (Teddle & Tashakkori 2003).

This research's findings can generate research interest in exploring other dimensions of guest reception experiences using the theoretical foundation of this study. The next section discusses the practical implications of the study.

9.4.2 Practical implications

The results of this study have several practical implications for service organisations, particularly hotel and tourism organisations. Hotel organisations can significantly influence guests' experiences by co-creating memorable experiences with guests. The results of this study have practical implications for policy-making, staff training, service design, and marketing purposes. Hotel managers may use findings from this study to develop strategies for enhancing guest experiences and managing the emotional labour experienced by staff.

The hospitality industry is global, with hotels receiving international guests from diverse cultural backgrounds. This study has successfully provided an empirically-based understanding of hotel reception experiences in a developing economy context. It has done so through the conduct of a systematic investigation in Accra, Ghana. In this Ghanaian setting, the hotel reception experiences differed markedly from those that international guests are used to in their countries of residence. As discussed in Chapter Two (Context), Ghana has a rich culture, hospitality and warmth towards visitors. This study offers several managerial implications that could assist relevant stakeholders in Ghana in delivering memorable tourism experiences to the international and local market.

This study has shown that the physical setting of the front office has a significant influence on hotel reception experiences which confirms what other studies have found (Ariffin & Aziz 2012a; Bitner 1990, 1992). Perhaps the most important conclusion from this study is the centrality of the cultural element to the reception experience and hotel reception servicescape, including how that element impacts on the experience of emotional labour by reception staff. Therefore in designing hotels' reception area, cultural touches could be put into consideration, for example, local artefacts and staff being dressed in traditional attires. This will bring about a form of differentiation from other international hotel brands and an enhanced guest experience. It will also signal the presence of specific cultural norms and practices in which the guest is participating.

The findings of this study also suggest the importance of sound human resource management and communication protocols to create experiences. This study has confirmed that the hotel reception experience is co-created and that this involves a complex and dynamic process. In a labour-intensive hotel industry, staff play a key role and are the core of the experience (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu 2011). Highly motivated and engaged staff are crucial to the success of the hotel organisation (Slåtten & Mehmetoglu 2011). Chen, Yen, and Tsai (2014) suggested that there is a relationship between staff

performance and management support, with customers' perceived quality of an organisation and its service. The guest encounter is the 'moment-of-truth', which starts right from the airport, to ensure guests have memorable reception experiences which can lead to repeat visits and also word-of-mouth recommendation (Dedeoglu, et al. 2018; Y. Liu & Jang 2009).

Communication in all forms plays a critical role in the co-creation of memorable hotel reception experiences. It is evident from this study that there are language barriers between receptionists and international guests, particularly guests from non-English speaking countries. Communication is important to build good interpersonal relationships, especially with international guests, for them to feel welcomed. In meeting the challenge relating to improving communication skills, adequate language training for local receptionists is essential, especially when interacting with foreign travellers and seeking to respond promptly and accurately to their needs.

How managers could support staff with emotional labour as a result of the co-creation of experiences, should be incorporated into the training of managers and made a part of their 'standard' skill set. This could help reduce staff turnover and other negative impacts of emotional labour on staff wellbeing, for example, burnout. Managers need to acquire skills to help staff deal with their emotional labour issues.

Managers should be mindful of the potential negative impact of certain cultural codes in encounters with guests. For example, in this study, receptionists reported several instances where some guests disagreed with some of the English translations given to some local symbolic Ghanaian artefacts. The cultural differences between the hosts and international guests could also be overcome by presenting informative materials about the cultural codes of Ghana to guests. Further, brief descriptions about the story behind the cultural codes with particular emphasis on historical aspects could be included and given to guests at the reception. This would provide guests with the opportunity to learn more about Ghanaian culture.

It is hoped that based on this study, several strategies could be adopted in teaching Front Office Operations and Management courses in hospitality programmes. Firstly, using Information Technology to bridge language barriers between guests and front desk staff in addition to teaching Front Desk staff to be multilingual. Secondly, managers could be trained to incorporate strategies into staff training for staff to adopt in order to deal with the emotional labour of the co-created experiences. The demands of emotional labour in the receptionist role, in particular, were found in this study to be a clear risk to staff retention and job satisfaction.

9.5 Future research

Based on the main findings of this research, various areas can be recommended to extend the understanding of hotel reception experiences. Further analysis is required to explore the hotel reception experiences in detail, particularly in a developing country context.

To better understand the implications of these results, further studies could:

- Investigate how levels of aversive emotional labour impact guest reception experiences and staff turnover. The current study has brought to light the emotional labour of the co-created reception experiences. However, much is not known about the extent to which staff are affected by the consequences of emotional labour such as burnout, alienation and turnovers. There might be staff who have already left the hotel industry as a result of the stress of emotional labour. It has been indicated in this study that staff associate negative co-creation with negative experiences from guests. There is a need for an investigation into how emotional labour impact guests experiences.
- Explore whether managers have the skills to handle staff emotional labour issues. Managers in this study mentioned that they help in co-creating reception experiences for guests. A majority of the Front Office Managers have been receptionists before. The implication is that they might have a fair knowledge of what receptionists experience at the front office. How can these managers use their skills and experiences to deal with their staff emotional labour issues?
- Assess strategies hotel receptionists could adopt in handling the hard-to-please guest and the theoretical implications of this. Handling hard to please guests is problematic for a majority of receptionists which is an added layer of pressure for emotional labour.

9.6 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to explore hotel reception experiences in a developing country context. Memorable hotel reception experiences are important in the hotel industry since they can lead to repeat business. This study makes contributions to the hotel literature on reception experiences which is under-researched in Ghana. This study has added to the body of hospitality (hotel) literature, with an improved understanding of the hotel reception experiences through its focus on a combination of certain key theoretical elements: co-creation, servicescapes and the experience economy. Exploring the interrelationships between these theoretical 'lenses' has identified nuanced features of the

creation of reception experiences. These features include the central role of cultural dimensions of reception servicescapes, the co-creation of reception experiences and the cross-cultural basis of experiences in this sector of the experience economy. Further, the incorporation of frontline reception staff into this complex cross-cultural co-creation of experiences results in significant stresses on, and challenges for, those frontline staff. That is, an experience is also co-created for the receptionists by the interactions between managers, guests, the servicescape requirements the broader economic and social contexts and the receptionists themselves; that can require unusually high degrees of emotional labour. This, in turn, affects the co-creation of the reception experiences for guests and, potentially, staff turnover and retention.

Chapter 10

Thesis Conclusion

10.1 Introduction

The hospitality and tourism industry in Ghana has received much attention in recent decades. A general claim is that the hospitality industry is directly associated with the cultural, economic, and intellectual potential of the country (Bokpin & Nyarko 2009). In recent years Ghana has witnessed a tremendous, rapidly increasing demand for hotel accommodation and services. This is due to an increase in visitor numbers as a result of tourism, business and investment opportunities, as well as educational exchange programmes (Nimako & Mensah 2013). As a result of this demand, there has been a continuous growth in hotel numbers and occupancy levels according to the data from the Ghana Statistical Service (2017).

The accommodation sector, including hotels, is a vital part of the hospitality industry (Baker, et al. 2000). However, tourism and hospitality researchers have shown little attention to the hotel reception experience. The literature on hotel studies has focused on the general process of service provision in hotels. That is, studies tend to focus on the entire hotel experience, including that in restaurants and housekeeping, but not much has been found explicitly on the hotel reception experiences despite the pivotal role such experiences have in establishing 'first impressions' of overall service experiences in hotels. This research helps to address the limited studies on the reception experience with its focus on a specific area – the hotel front office/reception area.

The front office, also known as reception, is a department which exists in all hotels regardless of size, management system, facilities, ownership, and the level of services rendered. The front office is regarded as the nerve centre of any hotel facility (Bardi 2007). According to Baker, et al. (2000), the front office department is the most visible department in a hotel. The focal point of activity within the front office is the reception desk, usually regarded as the communication centre for the hotel's operations (Ansah, et al. 2012; Baker, et al. 2000).

10.2 The Hotel reception experiences

The aim of this study was to explore the hotel reception experience and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in this experience within a developing economy's (Ghana) context. The main constructs that underpin this study are the experience economy, co-creation and servicescapes (Pine & Gilmore 1999; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2004b). The theories suggest reception experiences are co-created by the host and the consumer and arise within a servicescape deliberately

designed for such experiences. In the context of this research, the receptionist is the host, and the guest is the consumer.

This study was conducted in eight hotels in Ghana; 3-star, 4-star and 5-star. The hotels were international and domestic. I adopted a purposive sampling method (Babbie 2016), but it was challenging to recruit hotels, particularly amongst 5-star international. The participants in the study were guests, receptionists and managers from the selected hotels. The study used a mixed-method approach of qualitative and quantitative technique for data collection. I used face-to-face, in-depth interviews for receptionists and managers and surveyed with open-ended questions for guests. In total, 22 receptionists, 16 managers and 361 guests participated in the study. As the fieldwork proceeded in Ghana, and as the analysis was carried out in New Zealand, I became aware of the pressures on receptionists. I searched for a new body of theory to understand it. Findings highlight the importance of a range of human interactions on reception experiences, with communication being key. The importance of staff characteristics was highlighted, which is understandable given the link between face-to-face interaction (co-creation) and staff attributes.

Theoretically, this research has advanced the field of work in hotel reception experience. First, this research has used theories from the developed world to understand the hotel reception experiences in a developing economy, Ghana where the three theories have not been applied before. These developed country theoretical frameworks were used for the data collection and analysis. Though the study successfully contextualised the theories and some of the findings were confirmatory, however, there were other findings which are context-specific in that they may particularly apply to Ghana and other developing countries. For example, gender issues and inequalities, and power relationships between receptionists, managers, and guests all appear to be accentuated in this context relative to that in developed countries.

A major finding from the study concerned the intersection between the complex environments of the service industry. Within a particular prevailing culture, a cross-cultural co-created experience, a highly gendered occupation and inequalities of power and income to the demands of co-creation are increased —this increase results in a high level of emotional labour for the receptionists. Emotional labour requires frontline staff to hide their true feelings and express feeling that managers think will make guests satisfied (Hochschild 1983, 2012). Nevertheless, and regardless of the above challenges, the findings indicate that the most prominent reason a significant majority of receptionists had for choosing their job was that they love human interaction and enjoy serving.

This study has contributed to the academic understanding of hotel reception experience in Ghana and other developing countries. Hotel managers may use findings from this study to develop strategies for enhancing guest experiences, and for training hotel reception staff. This study provides insight for

government and policymakers for policy improvement within the hospitality and tourism industry in general. Finally, it is anticipated that this study will generate new research areas in the hotel literature, especially for developing economies.

Given that the hotel reception experience is co-constructed, managers must understand their potential role in that process. They should put their efforts into training staff to deal with a highly complex co-creation process. At present, they are experiencing relatively high levels of challenge in helping co-create positive experiences. The ability of frontline staff to handle the interaction is the 'moment-of-truth' in the reception experience and one which can begin right from the airport pick-up. From the organisation's point of view, this would ensure that guests have a memorable experience, leading to repeat visits and word-of-mouth recommendation.

This study's most important conclusion is the centrality of the cultural element to the reception experience and hotel reception servicescape. Therefore in designing hotels reception, cultural touches could be considered, for example, local artefacts and staff being dressed in traditional attire. This will bring about a form of differentiation from other international hotel brands and an enhanced guest experience.

The reception experiences are important, as it creates the first impression for guests. This impression speaks volumes about the overall experience of a hotel and the entire destination. In today's globalised business and tourism world, the importance of reception experience is jeopardised by an overly simplistic understanding of how it is generated. Particularly, the importance of human touch to the experiences which makes staff a key resource in the co-creation process.

This study has revealed the nuanced complexity of this co-creation process. The study has suggested that managers need to understand their role in that process and support their staff. Despite being in one sense a 'small part' of people's global experiences today, it can be fundamental to those same experiences.

10.3 The story of a thesis

I had always enjoyed serving people from a young age. Because of that, my father encouraged me to pursue a course in hospitality. After my secondary school education, one of my teachers encouraged me to go to the polytechnic to acquire practical hospitality skills. I gained admission to pursue Higher National Diploma in Hotel Catering and Institutional Management.

It was a requirement for students pursuing hospitality to go for industrial attachment at the end of each year. So at the end of my first year, I went to a three-star hotel. I had the opportunity to be trained in the hotel's core departments, such as the restaurant, kitchen, housekeeping, and the front office. I

enjoyed working at the front office the most, particularly interacting with guests from different socio-cultural backgrounds. As part of our industrial training requirement, everyone in our class did a presentation on our industrial experience at the beginning of the semester. To my surprise, my mates who went to higher star-rated hotels, such as four and five-star hotels, were not allowed at the front office. The reason was that the front office was critical to the reception experience; therefore, trainees were not allowed there. At the end of my second year, I decided to go to a four-star hotel in Accra with some of my friends. In that hotel, none of us was allowed at the front desk. That got me thinking about the critical role of the front office in guest experiences.

A couple of years later, I had the opportunity to manage a small residential facility. This allowed me to acquire further skills in managing the front office human resources. I later pursued a higher degree in hospitality and education to be a professional teacher. I went back to the polytechnic to teach and was offered Front Office Operations and Management. That was when I developed a stronger passion for front office practices. During that time, I realised the department had had facilities for students' practical training for all the core hospitality courses such as Food Production, Food and Beverage Service and Housekeeping but not the Front Office Operations. This situation meant that students had to go to hotels for practical training. Again I could not find much scholarly work published about the front office in the Ghanaian context. All teaching and learning materials were from international sources.

So, during my Master's degree, I decided to do a dissertation on front office management. My case study was a four star-international hotel in Accra. I had difficulties in the data collection. During the data collection, I became aware of the many challenges of managing the hotel's front office. These challenges included staff turnovers, low staff motivation, low pay and other management issues. After my Masters' degree, I worked as a Hospitality and Tourism Management lecturer at a University in Ghana. My institution readied people for both the education sector and industry. I was also involved in training front office staff in hotels.

I enjoy travelling, and anytime I stay in a hotel in different hotel brands for the experience. I usually engage the receptionists in conversations to know more about how they feel about their job. I learnt a lot from these receptionists, which was helpful for my teaching.

I had always dreamt of pursuing a higher degree but never knew when and where until my employers gave me the opportunity to pursue a PhD. I gained admission at Lincoln University, and my supervisors helped lay a strong foundation for my research and planning my fieldwork. My study has been guided

by the theories of the experience economy, co-creation and servicescapes. These theories were used to design my data collection instruments.

My data collection took place in Ghana. It was a challenging but interesting experience. I encountered difficulties in recruiting hotels and participants, particularly hotel guests. But I persisted, although my data collection took longer than planned. The part I enjoyed most was having conversations with the participants about their experiences. I had expected some unexpected results, and probably some silences to listen to (for example, staff who had left the industry).

My data analysis and writing took place at Lincoln University. As I listened to the interviews and revisited the written responses, I relived the encounters with the receptionists. Receptionists talked about the challenges they go through at the front office. Particularly their interactions with guests place a huge emotional burden on them. Receptionists are required to show pleasant emotions at all times, regardless of how they feel. These findings led to a new question and a body of theory to understand the receptionists' experiences - emotional labour.

As at the time of wrapping up my writing, there was COVID 19, and New Zealand went into lockdown. The pandemic was unsettling and challenging as far as finishing the thesis was concerned. New Zealand became COVID free, but cases kept going up in my country Ghana, which was worrying. The pandemic kept me thinking about the co-creation of the reception experiences, given that human interactions were key to the experience. However, the pandemic made many people realise the importance of meeting together face-to-face, which nothing can replace.

My work experiences from the hotel industry, as a teacher in hospitality, and as a hotel guest motivated me to investigate hotel reception experiences from the host and guest perspectives.

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Appendix A

Letter to Management of hotels

Yaa Mawufemor Akubia
PhD Student.
Faculty of Environment, Society and Design
PO Box 85084
Lincoln University
Lincoln 7647
Christchurch, New Zealand
16th March 2017

The General Manager
..... Hotel
Accra - Ghana

Dear Sir/Madam

Assessing the hotel guest reception experience in a developing country context (Ghana)

I introduce myself as Yaa Mawufemor Akubia, a Ghanaian citizen, completing a Doctoral degree (PhD) at Lincoln University New Zealand. My research is based on *the guest hotel reception experience in Ghana hotels* and my research requires fieldwork in a sample of hotels in Accra. This communication is to request your assistance with my gathering data from your hotel.

I am sure you will agree that the experience a guest receives at the hotel reception is an important occasion that sets the tone for the remainder of their stay and this research will add to our understanding of this occasion and be of benefit to all stakeholders. For example, it will provide a valuable perspective on guest experience at your hotel and may support your ongoing commitment to excellent memorable guest experiences. It may also serve as a guide for future training for your hotel front office team and positive outcomes for repeat business.

The assistance I am seeking is your permission for your hotel to be part of this research which would include being introduced to your front office employees, permission to be in the hotel lobby (which will not seem intrusive) to ask selected incoming guest to complete a short questionnaire, and short interviews with yourself, the Front Office Managers and some receptionists (maximum 30 minutes).

In return for participating in this research project, when the research is complete, I would be happy to provide you with a two-page general summary of key findings / overview of the research as it relates to your hotel. A digital link to the entire thesis at Lincoln University will also be made available.

I have attached for your perusal all documents related to this research and I would appreciate you advising by return email (yaamawufemor.akubia@lincoln.ac.nz) if your hotel would be part of this research. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to email me. If I do not hear back from you by email, I'll contact you by telephone next week, with the aim of arranging a time to meet with you to discuss my project in more detail.

Thank you

Yaa Mawufemor Akubia

Appendix B

Research Information sheet

B.1 Research Information Sheet for hotel guest

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY: FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENT, SOCIETY AND DESIGN

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET FOR HOTEL GUESTS

Research Project:

Assessing the hotel guest reception experience in a developing country context (Ghana) a stakeholders' perspective

Is this you?

- ❖ International or domestic traveler
- ❖ Non - local traveler
- ❖ Aged 18 years and above
- ❖ Your purpose of travel is for business or leisure
- ❖ Checked in by the hotel receptionist

I would like to invite you to participate in a project entitled ***“Assessing the hotel reception experience in a developing country context: a stakeholders' perspective”***. The aim of this project is to critically explore hotel guests' reception experience and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in the context of a developing country – Ghana. The findings of this project are part of a study leading to attainment of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree.

Your participation in this research is by answering a short questionnaire which is estimated to take no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, your anonymity is guaranteed and you may decline to answer any question. You may withdraw from the project, including withdrawing any information you have provided up to 16th May 2018 by contacting the researcher or her supervisors through the contact address below.

Completion of the survey is deemed to be consent to participating in this research voluntary

The results of the project will be submitted as part of the thesis to the Faculty of Environment, Society and Design of Lincoln University and may also be published in academic journals. The identity of any participant will not be made public or known to any person other than the Human Ethics Committee in the event of an audit. This Research Information Sheet has a unique code which will correspond with the code on the questionnaire, for easy identification in case a participant wants his/her data to be deleted.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee. If you have any queries or concerns about your participation in the project, please contact the researcher or her supervisors; we would be happy to discuss any concerns you have about participation in the project.

Researcher: Yaa Mawufemor Akubia Lincoln University E-mail: yaamawufemor.akubia@lincoln.ac.nz

Supervisors: Dr Joanna Fountain, Senior Lecturer in Tourism, E-mail: Joanna.Fountain@lincoln.ac.nz

Dr Anthony Brien, Senior Lecturer Business and Hotel Management, E-mail: Anthony.Brien@lincoln.ac.nz

B.2 Research information sheet for hotel receptionists

LINCOLN UNIVERSITY: FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENT, SOCIETY AND DESIGN

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET FOR HOTEL RECEPTIONISTS

Research Project:

Assessing the hotel guest reception experience in a developing country context (Ghana) a stakeholders' perspective

I would like to invite you to participate in a project entitled ***“Assessing the hotel reception experience in a developing country context: a stakeholders' perspective”***. The aim of this project is to critically explore hotel guests' reception experience and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in the context of a developing country – Ghana. The findings of this project are part of a study leading to attainment of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree.

Your participation in this project will involve a face-to-face interview with the researcher which is estimated to take 20-30 minutes to complete. The interview may be audio recorded and notes may be taken. You may be assured of your anonymity in this investigation.

Your participation in this research is by answering a short questionnaire which is estimated to take no longer than 10-15 minutes to complete. Participation is voluntary, your anonymity is guaranteed and you may decline to answer any question. You may withdraw from the project, including withdrawing any information you have provided up to 16th May 2018 by contacting the researcher or her supervisors through the contact address below.

Managers will not know about what receptionists say in this interview. The identity of any participant will not be made public or known to any person other than the Human Ethics Committee in the event of an audit. To ensure anonymity individual interview data will be seen only by the researcher and will be stored in an electronic form with password protection. No respondent will be named in the thesis or any published work being described by roles only (eg. Receptionist 1 with 5 years' experience from hotel A). This Research Information Sheet has a unique code which will correspond with the code on the consent form, for easy identification in case a participant wants his/her data to be deleted.

The results of the project will be submitted as part of the thesis to the Faculty of Environment, Society and Design of Lincoln University and may also be published in academic journals.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee. If you have any queries or concerns about your participation in the project, please contact the researcher or her supervisors; we would be happy to discuss any concerns you have about participation in the project.

Researcher: Yaa Mawufemor Akubia Lincoln University E-mail: yaamawufemor.akubia@lincoln.ac.nz

*Supervisors: Dr Joanna Fountain, Senior Lecturer in Tourism, E-mail: Joanna.Fountain@lincoln.ac.nz
Dr Anthony Brien, Senior Lecturer Business and Hotel Management, E-mail: Anthony.Brien@lincoln.ac.nz*

B.3 Research information sheet for hotel Front Office Managers

**LINCOLN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENT, SOCIETY AND DESIGN**

RESEARCH INFORMATION SHEET FOR FRONT HOTEL FRONT OFFICE MANAGER

Please, I would like to invite you to participate in a project entitled ***“Assessing the hotel reception experience in a developing country context: a stakeholders’ perspective”***. The aim of this project is to critically explore the hotel reception experience and the expectations, perceptions (and satisfaction) of different stakeholders in the context of a developing country – Ghana. The findings of this project is part of a study leading to attainment of a Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) degree.

Your participation in this project will involve a face-to-face interview with the researcher which is estimated to take 20-30 minutes to complete. The interview may be audio recorded and notes may be taken as well.

Your participation is voluntary and you may decline to answer any question. You may withdraw from the project, including withdrawing any information you have provided up to 16th May 2018 by contacting the researcher or her supervisors through the contact address below. Consent forms will be signed by you to indicate voluntary consent to participating in this research.

The results of the project will be submitted as part of the thesis to the Faculty of Environment, Society and Design of Lincoln University and may also be published in academic journals. However, you may be assured of your anonymity in this investigation. The identity of any participant will not be made public or known to any person other than the Human Ethics Committee in the event of an audit. To ensure anonymity individual interview data will be seen only by the researcher and will be stored in an electronic form with password protection. No respondent will be named in the thesis or any published work being described by roles only (eg. Front Office Manager 1, with 10 years experience from hotel A). This Research Information Sheet will be given a unique code which will correspond with the code on the consent form, for easy identification incase a participant wants his/her data to be deleted.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee. If you have any queries or concerns about your participation in the project, please contact the researcher or her supervisors; we would be happy to discuss any concerns you have about participation in the project.

Researcher: Yaa Mawufemor Akubia Lincoln University E-mail: yaamawufemor.akubia@lincoln.ac.nz

*Supervisors: **Dr Joanna Fountain, Senior Lecturer in Tourism, E-mail: Joanna.Fountain@lincoln.ac.nz**
Dr Anthony Brien, Senior Lecturer Business and Hotel Management, E-mail: Anthony.Brien@lincoln.ac.nz*

Appendix C

Research Consent Form



Research Consent Form

Name of Research Project: Assessing the hotel reception experience in a developing country context: a stakeholders' perspective

I have read and understood the description of the above-named project. On this basis, I agree to participate in the project, and I consent to publication of the results of the project with the understanding that anonymity will be preserved. I understand also that I may withdraw from the project, including withdrawal of any information I have provided, up to 16th May 2018.

I agree to audio recording of the interview []

I do not agree to audio recording, only notes should be taken []

Name: _____

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D

Research Instrument

D.1 Questionnaire for Guest



[]

Guest Questionnaire

Your Reception Experience with this hotel

Thank you for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire. Please do not put your name on the paper.

INSTRUCTIONS: This questionnaire contains three (3) sections (part 1- 3). Please answer all questions by either writing few words after the question or ticking/markng a box where applicable. Once completed, **please return it to a drop box at the reception.**

Part 1. Your stay and initial impressions of the reception

How many nights are you staying in this hotel?.....

How many nights are you spending in this destination in total?.....

How many times have you stayed at this hotel? time(s).

If you have lodged in this hotel for more than once, what brings you back?

.....

How many times have you stayed in a hotel in the last 12 Months?

Purpose of trip		
Number of times	Business	leisure
1 – 5 Times		
6 – 10 Times		
More than 10 times		

What were the three most important things for you when checking-in at this hotel on this visit?

1.

.....

2.

.....

3.
.....

What did you like most about the check-in (reception) experience?

.....
.....
.....

What were the elements of the experience that did not match your expectation, if any?

.....
.....
.....
.....

In what ways did this hotel reception experience differ from experiences you have had at hotel receptions in other countries? Please give specific examples (that is, name the country)

.....
.....
.....
.....

Is the star rating of the hotel (3, 4 or 5) important in your selection of a hotel? Yes /No

Why do you say that?.....

.....
.....

What hotel star rated hotel do you usually stay in?.....

Does your preference for a particular star rating change depending on the country you are in? Yes /No

Why do you say that?.....

.....
.....

Does your choice of a star rated hotel changes depending on if your travel purpose is for business or pleasure? Yes/No

Why do yo say that?.....

.....
.....

What are some of the differences in the hotel reception experience you expect when staying in a 3 star versus a 5-star hotel?

.....
.....
.....

In the last 12 months, how many times have you stayed in the following star rated hotel?

A 3-star hotel,time(s)

A 4-star hotel,.....time(s)

A 5- star hotel,.....time(s)

The following table lists several factors one might consider when deciding on the choice of a hotel. Please indicate how **important** each of the following element is to you when you choosing a hotel.

Item	Not at all important				extremely important			
The hotel has well-known brand name								
Check-in expectation is based on the brand								
The hotel is locally branded								
The hotel is internationally branded								
The hotel is part of a chain of hotels								
Past/previous reception experience with the brand								
Brand recommendation from family, friends, or colleagues.								
My loyalty to the brand								

Would you choose an 'international branded' hotel over a domestic/local branded hotel?

Yes [] No []

Why?.....
.....
.....

Overall would you say the experience you received today at check-in was?

Better than expected [] why is it better.....

The same as expected [] why is it as expected.....

Worse than expected [] why is it less than expected.....

What will be your lasting memory of the reception experience you had at this hotel, if any?

.....
.....
.....

Part 2

The following table lists a number of features one might experience during a hotel reception experience. Please indicate how **important** each of the following element is to you when you take a trip of the type you are taking today (e.g business, leisure).

	Not at all important				extremely important			
Item	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
The layout and signage of the hotel makes it easy for me to find the reception								
The reception area looks attractive as I approach								
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination								
I am given a welcome at the reception								
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area								
The reception area is neat and tidy								
The décor of the reception is visually appealing								
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in								
The receptionist is professional in appearance								
The receptionist’s appearance reflects the culture of the destination								
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand								
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in								
The hotel’s records of my booking are accurate								
The receptionist communicates clearly to me								
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous								
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures								
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area								
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate								
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed								
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs								
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in								
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in								
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in								
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check- in								
The check-in is prompt and efficient								

Thinking about your check-in (reception) experience at this hotel today, how would you rate the performance of these elements of your reception experience?

Item	Poor				Excellent		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception							
The area looked attractive as I approach							
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination							
I was given a welcome at the reception							
I was acknowledged immediately I entered the reception area							
The reception area was neat and tidy							
The décor of the reception was visually appealing							
The Receptionist seemed to be interested in my needs during check-in							
The Receptionist was professional							
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination							
The receptionist spoke to me in a language I understood							
The receptionist understood my special requirements while checking-in							
The hotel's records of my booking was accurate							
The receptionist communicated clearly to me							
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous							
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures							
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area							
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate							
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area made me feel relaxed							
The receptionist spent an appropriate amount of time on my needs							
I was treated as a valued guest							
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in							
I was able to find out the features of the hotel at check-in							
I was escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in							
The check-in was prompt and efficient							

Part 3. Trip characteristics and demographics

What is the main purpose of your trip? (Tick only one)

Leisure/holiday []

Business []

Conference/convention []

Visiting friends and relatives []

Other ☐ please specify.....

Who is in your travel party? (tick as many as apply)

Spouse/Partner ☐

Children ☐

Family friends ☐

Business associates/colleagues ☐

Friends ☐

Only me ☐

Others ☐ please specify.....

How old were you at your last birthday?

18 – 29 years ☐

30 – 39 years ☐

40 – 49 years ☐

50 – 59 years ☐

60 – 69 years ☐

70 years & above ☐

What is your nationality?

What is your current country of residence?

Please indicate the highest qualification you have achieved.

No formal certificate ☐

Trade certificate ☐

Diploma ☐

Degree ☐

Post graduate diploma/degree ☐

Others specify.....

What is your occupation?.....

Sex: Male ☐ Female ☐

Thank you for your time in completing this questionnaire. Have a pleasant stay.

D.2 Interview Guide for receptionists

Interview Guide for Hotel Receptionist (indicative questions)

Can you tell me a bit about yourself?

Education

Previous jobs

Home town/ethnicity (nationality)

Why did you become a receptionist?

How long have you worked in this hotel?

Have you spent all this time as a receptionist?

Do you have previous experience as a hotel receptionist?

If relevant: How have your experiences in different hotels differed?

By star rating

By country/region

The types of guests

What kind of training have you been given in this hotel?

Was this training appropriate for the role you have?

How important do you think training is to your job?

What do you like about your job?

What do you think is the most important element of your job?

What do you find rewarding about your job?

What do you find challenging or difficult about your job?

What do you think are the most important parts of the reception experience?

How do you feel your own skills contribute to guest's reception experiences?

Skills, attitudes, professionalism

What do you think guests enjoy most about the reception experience?

By Gender

Age,

Country/Nationality of guests,

Purpose of trip etc,

Travel experience

Are there certain types of visitors who you find demanding/challenging?

If yes, who? And why do you think this is so?

How do you handle demanding guests?

Do you find differences in the needs and demands of different types of guests when checking them in?

By purpose of trip?

By nationality and/or culture?

Age?

Gender?

What do you find to be the biggest cultural differences between you and the international guests?

Language?

Behaviour?

Values?

Do you think you will continue working in a hotel environment?

Why/why not?

In what role?

What role do you think the design, ambience, and layout of the reception plays in creating reception experience?

Does the hotel prescribe a dress code for you? Why?

How important do you think your uniform is to the job you do?

D.3 Interview Guide for Front Office Managers

Interview Guide for Front Office Managers (indicative questions)

How long have you worked in this hotel as a Front Office Manager?

What positions have you been engaged in before being a Front Office Manager?

Have you worked in other hotels?

How have your experiences in different hotels differed?

By star rating

By country/region

Have you ever worked as a receptionist in a hotel?

What type of hotel?

Location?

Star rating?

What do you think is the most important part of your current role?

What qualities do you look for when employing receptionists?

Pleasant personality?

Adequate knowledge of the job?

What nationalities are your receptionists?

If not all domestic: Does the hotel have a deliberate policy to employ receptionist from a range of backgrounds?

Why is that?

Do you encourage your receptionist to be bi-lingual or multi-lingual?

Are there any cultural differences between you and your receptionists?

If so, how do you deal with cultural differences in your role?

What role do you have in training your receptionists?

What type of training do you usually engage them in? eg. Formal, on-the-job/in-service training, etc.

What challenges do you face in supervising the reception staff?

Cultural differences?

Lack of work experience?

Attitude to work?

How they deal with guests?

What role do you think the design, ambience, and layout of the reception area has in creating a memorable reception experience for guests?

Do you spend any time working at the check in desk?

In what situations?

Do you get feedback on guest satisfaction?

How do you deal with guest complain?

What are the registration/checking in process?

What is the manning hours of the reception desk?

Is there a procedure receptionist must follow in relation to welcoming and checking guests in?

How would you describe this hotel's check-in experience?

D.4 Interview Guide for Hotel General Managers

How many rooms do you currently have in this hotel?

Types of rooms?

Who are the owners of this hotel?

Private (*an independent hotel owned by a person, a partnership, or a private company*)

Local group (*several hotels owned by a local company*)

International group (*hotels which forms part of an international chain of hotels*)

What role do the owner play in the operations and management of this hotel?

What is the management structure of this hotel?

Franchise?

Management contract?

Owner manager?

Who are involved in the design of the physical and ambient setting of the reception?

Were you involved in the design of the physical and ambient setting of the reception area?

What is the theme of the design?

To reflect the culture of the destination?

To reflect the chain/franchise of the hotel

How often do you redesign or change the setting of the front desk?

What are the characteristics of your guests?

Age, gender, travel type, nationality etc

How many staff are working in this hotel?

How many of them are reception staff/Receptionists?

Do you prescribe a dress code for staff? Why?

What is the dress code of the reception desk staff?

What policies do you have when it comes to hiring receptions?

Work experience? Languages spoken? Physical appearance/deportment? Human relations skills? Competencies? Nationality? Age? Gender? Educational qualifications?

What qualities do you look for in your receptionists?

What are the characteristics of your reception staff?

nationality, gender, length of employment, age?

What training programmes does the hotel have in place for reception staff?

Induction? Refresher? Remedial? Promotional?

What is the cost of the training to the hotel?

Do you think the cost of training your reception staff pays dividends? Why do you say that?

What role do you think star rating has in front office services?

Selection of receptionist, Design of reception area, facilities and services offered to guests at reception

How would you describe the physical appearance of the front desk?

What are the services/operations conducted at the reception desk?

Making Reservations, checking in and check out?

Finding out information about the local area or the services the hotel

Is there a waiting area?

Can it be used as a wind-down area for conference delegates?

What are the registration/checking in process?

What is the manning hours of the reception desk?

Is there a procedure receptionist must follow in relation to welcoming and checking guests in?

How would you describe the physical design and layout of the reception area?

How would you describe the physical appearance of the reception desk?

Is it in fitting with the theme and design of the hotel?

What kind of atmosphere do you try to create in the reception area?

Is it designed to facilitate queues or large crowds checking in at the one time?

What are the lighting levels like at the front desk?

Is there music in the background?

What is the music style and volume?

Do you feel it is appropriate?

Is the reception area well signed for rooms, the restaurant, lifts and other facilities/amenities etc.?

Is there a porter/bell person on standby to carry the customers' luggage to their rooms after check-in?

Does the front desk have the necessary equipment for the receptionists to conduct check-in effectively?

What do you think your guests value most about their experience with your hotel?

How would you describe this hotel's check-in experience?

Appendix E Human Ethics Approval

Research Management Office

T 64 3 423 0817
PO Box 85084, Lincoln University
Lincoln 7647, Christchurch
New Zealand
www.lincoln.ac.nz

2-August 2017

Application No: 2017-36

Title: Assessing the hotel reception experience in a developing country context: a stakeholders' perspective

Applicant: Y Akubia

The Lincoln University Human Ethics Committee has reviewed the above noted application.

Thank you for your response to the questions which were forwarded to you on the Committee's behalf.

I am satisfied on the Committee's behalf that the issues of concern have been satisfactorily addressed.
I am pleased to give final approval to your project.

Please note that this approval is valid for three years from today's date at which time you will need to reapply for renewal.

Once your field work has finished can you please advise the Human Ethics Secretary, Alison Hind, and confirm that you have complied with the terms of the ethical approval.

May I, on behalf of the Committee, wish you success in your research.

Yours sincerely



Grant Tavinor
Chair, Human Ethics Committee

PLEASE NOTE: The Human Ethics Committee has an audit process in place for applications. Please see 7.3 of the Human Ethics Committee Operating Procedures (ACHE) in the Lincoln University Policies and Procedures Manual for more information.

Appendix F

Interview results analysis

Appendix F1 Demographics of receptionists

Participant	Hotel	Gender	Educational qualification	Nationality	Length of employment in the current hotel	Previous experience as a receptionist
3	3-star (Int.)	Female	BSc Accounting	Ghanaian (E/R)*	1 year	None
4	3-star (Int.)	Female	ACCA Accounting/ IATA passenger handling	Ghanaian (V/R)*	2 years	As receptionist in a 3 & 5- star hotel
5	3-star (Int.)	Female	Degree in Hospitality	Ghanaian (G/R)*	2 years	None
6	3-star (Int.)	Male	Degree in Psychology	Ghanaian (C/R)*	1 month	None
9	3-star (Domestic)	Female	Degree in hospitality	Ghanaian (C/R)*	1 year	None
10	3-star (Domestic)	Female	Dip. in Management and Entrepreneurship, HRM with computing, and a certificate in Hospitality Management.	Ghanaian (V/R)*	9 years	None
12	3-star (Domestic)	Male	Degree in Geography and Economics	Ghanaian (V/R)*	3 months	None
15	3-star (Domestic)	Female	Degree in Human Resource Management	Ghanaian (A/R)*	5 years	
16	3-star (Int.)	Female	Degree in Hotel Management	Ghanaian (UE/R)	8 years	Receptionist and reservation agent
18	4-star (Domestic)	Male	Degree in communication and majored in strategic communication, currently pursuing an LLB program (in the final year)	Ghanaian (G/R)*	6 years	None
19	4-star (Domestic)	Female	BSc in Philosophy and Sociology	Ghanaian (G/R)*	5 years	None
21	4-star (Domestic)	Female	Degree in Hotel Management, and HND Hotel Catering and Institutional Management	Ghanaian (A/R)*	4 Months	Receptionist in a 3-star hotel
24	5-star (Domestic)	Male	Diploma in Tourism	Ghanaian (C/R)*	7 years	None
25	5-star (Domestic)	Female	Degree in Marketing	Ghanaian (C/R)*	6 years	As a receptionist

26	3-star (Int.)	Female	Diploma in Hospitality	Ghanaian (G/R)*	10 years	None
27	3-star (Int.)	Female	Diploma in Hospitality Management	Ghanaian (G/R)*	10 years	A receptionist in a 3 & 4-star hotel
28	5-star (Domestic)	Male	Diploma in Hotel Management	Ghanaian (G/R)*	8 years	None
32	4-star (Domestic)	Female	O' Level (ordinary level)	Ghanaian (V/R)*	22 years	As a receptionist in a budget hotel
35	4-star (Int.)	Female	Degree in English and French	Ghanaian (UE/R)*	4 months	None
36	4-star (Int.)	Female	Degree in English	Chinese	5 months	None
37	4-star (Int.)	Female	B.A Psychology	Ghanaian	2 years	None
38	4-star (Domestic)	Female	Diploma in Business studies, and Diploma in Hospitality management	Ghanaian (C/R)*	15 years	A receptionist in a 4-star hotel

*Regions in Ghana – E/R=Eastern Region, V/R= Volta Region, Greater Accra Region, C/R=Central Region, A/R=Ashanti Region, UE/R= Upper East Region, UE/R= Upper West region

Appendix F2 Demographics of Front office Managers

Participant	Hotel	Gender	Languages spoken	Nationality	How long they have been FOM	Previous reception experience
1	3-star (Int.)	Female	English and French	Ghanaian	2 years	Reservation agent, Receptionist, Assistant Front Office Manager
2	3-star (Int.)	Female	English and French	Ghanaian	2 years	Hospitality industry intern, Reservations agent, Reservations supervisor, Assistant Front Office Manager.
8	3-star (Domestic)	Female	English and French	Ghanaian	4 years	Receptionist, Business centre coordinator, Reception supervisor
14	4-star (Domestic)	Male	English and French	Ghanaian	6 years	Receptionist, Reception supervisor, Duty Manager
20	4-star (Domestic)	Female	English and French	Ghanaian	6 years	Switchboard operator, receptionist, Reception supervisor
23	5-star (Domestic)	Female	English	Ghanaian	2 years	Receptionist, Reception supervisor, Reservations agent
30	3-star (Int.)	Female	English and French	Ghanaian	10 years	Receptionist, Reception supervisor, Rooms Division Manager, General Manager
31	4-star (Domestic)	Female	English and French	Ghanaian	15 years	Receptionist, Reception supervisor, Assistant Front Office Manager, Rooms Division Manager, General Manager

34	4-star (Int.)	Female	English	Ghanaian	2 years	Guest relations officer, Duty manager, housekeeping manager
39	4-star (Domestic)	Female	English and French	Ghanaian	1 year	Receptionist, Reception supervisor,

Appendix F3 Interview coding - Receptionist

Interview coding – Receptionist

Questions/ main theme	Code	Key words
Why did you become a receptionist?	Interest in interacting with guest	Interacting with guests, Contact with guest, Meeting guests/people, Meeting people from different cultures, Sharing experiences, Human relation
	An interest in serving guests	Attending to peoples/guests need, Enjoy/love serving people/guest, Caring for people Meeting/attending to guest/people's needs Satisfying guest Helping people
	Love/like the job	Love the hotel job Like the job Enjoy it
	Personal traits -	Friendliness Peoples person
	Programme of study in school	<i>studies in psychology,</i> studied hospitality management
	Cultural exchange -	Learn from different cultures Peoples different behaviours Learn other languages
	recommendation by a family/friend/colleague	Recommended by family
	By chance	Job offer <i>wanted to try something new</i> it just happened just applied

Do you have previous experience as a hotel receptionist?	Yes Has reception experience	<i>I was at the front office.</i> <i>Yes, I was the night auditor</i> <i>I did that for five years</i> <i>I started as a receptionist</i>
	No but has experience in other sections of the hotel	No <i>not in the hotel industry</i> <i>Not really</i> <i>I started as a waiter</i>
	No Has no hotel experience	<i>I had none experience.</i> <i>I started as a lobby hostess</i> <i>No, this is my first place</i> <i>No experience</i> <i>Not at all, This is her first job,</i> <i>I had no experience.</i> <i>No, before here, no I did not</i> No first time working at a hotel. first time trying hospitality business
What kind of training have you been given in this hotel?	On the-job-training only	Induction, learning on the job, internal training, training by the supervisor, in-house-training
	Both on-the-job and formal	<i>I have done on the facilitators coming in to train us job training</i> <i>informal training</i> <i>a whole week training</i> <i>somebody from outside to train</i> <i>had short courses</i>
	Off-the-job training only	<i>external training,</i>
Was the training appropriate for the role you have?	Yes, very appropriate	Yes, very appropriate, it helps, its important, its crucial, beneficial <i>specifically to what I do</i> <i>Yes it was</i> <i>Yeah, very</i> <i>Yeah</i> <i>Yes, please</i>

		Yes, it has been. Yes, it was very beneficial P38.
	<i>Not all of them, it's appropriate</i>	<i>Not all of them, it's appropriate</i>
	No training	<i>I have not had any training</i>
How important do you think training is to your job?	To learn technical skills	How to do the job, technical things, <i>how to go about the job, the technical aspect of the job, the process at the reception,</i> <i>How to receive guests, how to communicate with guests, body language, eye contact, making sure the guest gets whatever he or she wants.</i>
	To learn/maintain the brand standard	<i>to maintain the standard of the brand</i>
	Social/human relation skills /interpersonal skills	<i>how to tolerate or accept people from different backgrounds, to handle guest</i>
	Enhancement of guest experience	serve guest better, serve guest well, deal with guest,
	New trends	New things, refresher course, change from the old way of doing things, keep up with trends, Guest expectation changes, competitors
	Natural traits for the job	To be born for it, Have passion, attitudes for it,
	Training is not important	<i>don't think training is important</i>
What do you like about your job?	Human interactions	Meeting different guest, meeting people, interacting with guests, chatting with guests, talking with guests
	Service	Serving guests, taking care of people, solving guest problems
	Helps to communicate	<i>communicate with your guests</i>
	Complements from guests	<i>well done</i> <i>guest appreciation</i>
	Satisfaction from giving good service,	Satisfaction from giving good service, when the guest is satisfied with the service when the guest is happy
	Source of income	<i>puts food on the table</i>
	Change in personality	<i>made me a better person, I have confidence now</i>
What do you think is the most important element of your job?	Human interactions,	Being tolerant Communication

		Listening/being a good listener,
	Customer satisfaction	customer satisfaction, making the customer happy
	Service	Going the extra mile to serve the guest, customer care,
	Good impression	<i>the guest leaves with a good impression</i>
	Personal attributes	Attitudes
What do you find rewarding about your job?	Service	Going the extra mile, When the guest is satisfied, providing exceptional service, enjoy serving Solving guest problems
	Human interaction	Contact with people
		Become a better person
	Guest feedback	Thank you from the guest, good comments, positive feedback
	Awards scheme'	'Brand builder, best worker award,
	Inner motivation which is rewarding	Love for the job, passion for the job,
	learning experience	Learn from the guest, learn about other cultures
What do you find challenging or difficult about your job?	Guest behaviour or attitude	Demanding guest, a guest who is hard to please or satisfy, a guest who is not understanding, unfriendly guest, <i>people with a different mindset;</i>
		differences in preferences and level of satisfaction, <i>everybody wants something different</i>
	Difficulty in serving guest	When receptionist cannot provide guest request, unable to deliver on the promise, Cannot resolve the guest problem
	Communication	Miscommunication
	Cultural differences	Language barriers
	The nature of the job	Filling the hotel room, long working hours
	Challenges with management	Lack of understanding on the part of management, to understand what receptionists do, emotional labour
	Low staff	Few staff
What do you think are the most important parts of the reception experience?	Human touch interaction	Relating to the guest, interacting with guest, smiles, calling the guest by name or titles, first impression, human touch.
		Communication – good eye contact, what you tell the guest
	Services	Pleasant check-in, prompt check-in
	Emerging theme The experience starts from the airport	<i>It begins from the airport, starts from the airport</i>

How do you feel your own skills contribute to guest's reception experiences?	Human relation skills	Social skills being a people's person, Communication skills, smiling, speaking fluently, being understanding, speaking more than one international language, conversation skills,
	Proactive skills	Being proactive, anticipating guests needs,
	Team or collaborative skills	Team work
Are there certain types of visitors who you find demanding/challenging? If yes, how do you think this is so?	Yes, difficult guest	Difficult guest, Guests who are not understanding, picky guest Guest who Complains. Hard to satisfy, unfriendly guest
		Guest who Complains
	YES Cultural difference	Guest who lack respect for women, the guest who receptionist are not able to understand when they speak, cultural barriers, a guest who are picky, <i>it's to do with nationality</i>
	Guest who want complementary products and services	'free things,' discount
	Guest who have an unmet expectation	Hotel not delivering what it promised to the guest
	Guest who will not want to compromise	<i>compromise</i>
	walk-in guest	<i>People who don't even make a reservation before</i>
	Experience travellers	<i>have travelled in most of the countries</i>
	Young ones who have achieved	<i>young ones who are top CEO</i>
What do you find to be the biggest cultural differences between you and the international guest?	cultural differences	language barriers, Guest behaviour, unfriendly, differences in values
	Guest behaviour	Unfriendly guest, different values, a guest who are not polite, disrespectful

Appendix G

One-Way ANOVA

Appendix G One-Way ANOVA and Independent T-Test Results on hotel reception expectation and experience

G1. One-Way ANOVA Results: Association of age with guest expectations

Expectation items	Mean \pm SD			Sig. F-value, p-value;	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	18—39yrs	40-59yrs	60yrs and above		
Reception service					
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.31 \pm .79	6.25 \pm .83	5.9 \pm 1.28	F=1.34; P=.26	
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.65 \pm 1.05	5.71 \pm .98	5.5 \pm 1.08	F=.28; P=.75	
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.78 \pm .96	5.68 \pm 1.04	5.7 \pm .94	F=.43; P=.64	
The check-in is prompt and efficient	6.30 \pm .91	6.26 \pm .81	6.30 \pm .82	F=.12; P=.88	
Staff attributes					
The receptionist is professional in appearance	6.08 \pm .93	5.91 \pm .91	6.2 \pm .91	F=1.7; p=.18	
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	5.19 \pm 1.3	5.13 \pm 1.46	5.3 \pm 1.49	F=.14; P=.86	
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.21 \pm .73	6.1 \pm .85	6.10 \pm .56	F=.81; F=.44	
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.22 \pm .80	6.14 \pm .86	6.1 \pm .27	F=.46; P=.62	
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.2 \pm .86	6.04 \pm .8	5.9 \pm 1.1	F=1.57; P=.157	
Servicescapes					
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.83 \pm 1.13	5.9 \pm 1.01	5.9 \pm 1.28	F=.15; P=.85	
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	6.04 \pm .81	6.01 \pm .75	6.10 \pm .73	F=.02; P=.97	
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	5.17 \pm 1.14	5.11 \pm 1.42	5.4 \pm .69	F=.23; P=.79	
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.30 \pm .68	6.18 \pm .74	6.00 \pm .66	F=1.95; P=.14	
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	5.97 \pm .80	5.93 \pm .81	6.00 \pm .66	F=.13; P=.87	
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.88 \pm .9	5.80 \pm .82	6.1 \pm .87	F=.8; P=.44	
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	5.66 \pm 1.01	5.71 \pm .86	6.10 \pm .73	F=1.03; P=.35	
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	6.02 \pm .89	5.95 \pm .83	6.2 \pm .91	F=.61; P=.54	
Co-creation					
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.21 \pm .82	6.16 \pm .78	6.2 \pm 1.03	F=.11; P=.89	
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	6.17 \pm .88	0.01 \pm .83	6.2 \pm .91	F=1.7; P=.18	

The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.22±.76	6.08±.77	6.10±.73	F=1.47; P=.23	
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.35±.69 ^a	6.17±.77 ^a	6.2±1.03	F=2.64; P=.05*	0.24
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.29±.75 ^a	6.08±.85 ^a	5.9±.87	F=3.79; P=.02*	0.14
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	6.28±.86	6.19±.82	6.3±.67	F=.45; P=.63	
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.08±.88	5.92±.87	6.0±.94	F=1.42; P=.24	
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	5.83±.99	5.95±.95	6.10±.73	F= .43; P=.64	

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with

G2. One-Way ANOVA Results: Association of nationality with guest expectations

Expectation items	Mean \pm SD			Sig. F-value, p-value;	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Ghanaians	Africans	Internationals		
Reception service					
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.25 \pm .86	6.40 \pm .90	6.23 \pm .85	F=1.26; P=.28	
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.66 \pm 1.05	5.77 \pm .93	5.70 \pm .95	F=.27; P=.75	
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.86 \pm .94	5.65 \pm 1.07	5.87 \pm .87	F=1.79; P=.16	
The check-in is prompt and efficient	6.22 \pm .98	6.01 \pm 1.35	6.24 \pm .92	F=1.50; P=.22	
Staff attributes					
The receptionist is professional in appearance	6.06 \pm .86	6.06 \pm .96	5.95 \pm .94	F=.70; P=.49	
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	5.13 \pm 1.28	5.12 \pm 1.57	5.20 \pm 1.32	F=.15; P=.85	
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.15 \pm .83	6.20 \pm .76	6.14 \pm .77	F=.16; P=.84	
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.32 \pm .79	6.18 \pm .77	6.13 \pm .87	F=1.58; P=.20	
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.13 \pm .97	6.17 \pm .79	6.09 \pm .80	F=.22; P=.79	
Servicescapes					
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.69 \pm 1.22	5.83 \pm 1.17	5.96 \pm .94	F=.18; P=.82	
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	6.02 \pm .86	6.09 \pm .75	6.04 \pm .75	F=.17; P=.84	
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	5.10 \pm 1.4	5.11 \pm 1.45	5.19 \pm 1.38	F=.17; P=.84	
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.34 \pm .77	6.27 \pm .72	6.17 \pm .66	F=2.01; P=.13	
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	5.92 \pm .76	6.04 \pm .76	5.89 \pm .84	F=1.00; P=.33	
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.75 \pm 1.04 ^a	5.85 \pm .88 ^a	6.00 \pm .82	F=2.05; P=.05*	.01
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	5.62 \pm 1.07	5.80 \pm 1.07	5.62 \pm 1.03	F=.73; P=.48	
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	5.90 \pm .96	5.87 \pm .96	5.99 \pm .85	F=.63; P=.53	
Co-creation					
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.12 \pm .82	6.17 \pm .87	6.24 \pm .73	F=.73; P=.48	
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	6.06 \pm .94	6.17 \pm .85	6.09 \pm .82	F=.36; P=.69	
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.13 \pm .82	6.21 \pm .78	6.14 \pm .73	F=.33; P=.71	
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.32 \pm .74	6.39 \pm .70 ^a	6.18 \pm .70 ^a	F=2.90; P=.05*	.03
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.25 \pm .79 ^a	6.31 \pm .76 ^a	6.09 \pm .83	F=2.92; P=.05*	0.1
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	6.13 \pm 1.01	6.02 \pm 1.21 ^a	6.29 \pm .90 ^a	F=2.34; P=.05*	.02
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	5.94 \pm 1.11	5.75 \pm 1.30 ^a	6.17 \pm .87 ^a	F=4.76; P=.009*	0.4
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	6.18 \pm .95	6.08 \pm .96	6.23 \pm .75	F=.89; P=.41	

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

G3. One-Way ANOVA Results: Association of the highest level of education with guest expectations

Expectation items	Mean \pm SD			Sig. F-value, p-value;	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Others	Degree	Post graduate		
Reception service					
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.38 \pm .79	6.33 \pm .79	6.20 \pm .86	F=1.32; P=.26	
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	6.09 \pm .79 ^{ab}	5.65 \pm 1.05 ^a	5.59 \pm 1.01 ^b	F=4.1; P=.01*	0.71
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.7 \pm .94	5.78 \pm .96	5.68 \pm 1.04	F=.43; P=.64	
The check-in is prompt and efficient	6.30 \pm .82	6.30 \pm .91	6.26 \pm .81	F=.12; P=.88	
Staff attributes					
The receptionist is professional in appearance	6.23 \pm .95	5.92 \pm 1.01	6.03 \pm .81	F=1.96; p=.14	
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	5.18 \pm 1.27	5.14 \pm 1.3	5.13 \pm 1.34	F=.03; P=.96	
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.31 \pm .78	6.14 \pm .77	6.14 \pm .80	F=.86; F=.42	
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.35 \pm .75	6.24 \pm .84	6.10 \pm .82	F=1.98; P=.13	
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.25 \pm 1.00	6.14 \pm .81	6.07 \pm .83	F=.85; P=.42	
Servicescapes					
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.9 \pm .92	5.92 \pm 1.0	5.79 \pm 1.2	F=.53; P=.58	
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	6.18 \pm .85	6.11 \pm .78 ^a	5.94 \pm .75 ^a	F=2.45; P=.05*	0.14
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	5.16 \pm 1.41	5.01 \pm 1.40	5.29 \pm 1.39	F=1.58; P=.20	
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.25 \pm .90	6.20 \pm .68	6.28 \pm .68	F=.48; P=.61	
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	5.85 \pm .89	5.93 \pm .84	6.00 \pm .74	F=.86; P=.42	
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	6.09 \pm .92 ^a	5.77 \pm .92 ^a	5.87 \pm .78	F=2.3; P=.05 *	0.14
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	6.10 \pm .73	5.66 \pm 1.01	5.71 \pm .86	F=1.03; P=.35	
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	6.2 \pm .91	6.02 \pm .89	5.95 \pm .83	F=.61; P=.54	
Co-creation					
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.37 \pm .78	6.19 \pm .85	6.15 \pm .75	F=1.26; P=.28	
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	5.95 \pm .87	6.10 \pm .88	6.15 \pm .84	F=.92; P=.39	
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.10 \pm .73	6.22 \pm .76	6.08 \pm .77	F=1.47; P=.23	
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.45 \pm .77	6.26 \pm .73	6.22 \pm .75	F=1.58; P=.20	
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.21 \pm 1.07	6.22 \pm .79	6.13 \pm .78	F=.51; P=.59	
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	6.42 \pm .76	6.14 \pm .93	6.28 \pm 6.28	F=2.36; P=.05*	0.13
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.0 \pm .94	6.08 \pm .88	5.92 \pm .87	F=1.42; P=.24	
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	6.10 \pm .73	5.83 \pm .99	5.95 \pm .95	F=.43; P=.64	

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

G4. Independent sample T-TEST: Association of gender with guest expectation

Experience items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	Male	Female	
Reception service			
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.3 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=0.4; P=0.6
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.7 \pm 1.0	5.5 \pm 1.0	T=1.1; P=0.2
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.7 \pm 1.0	5.6 \pm 0.8	T=0.5; P=0.2
The check-in is prompt and efficient	6.3 \pm 0.9	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=0.3; P=0.7
Staff attributes			
The receptionist is professional in appearance	5.9 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 1.0	T=0.7; P=0.5
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	5.2 \pm 1.3	5.0 \pm 1.5	T=1.0; P=0.3
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.7	T=1.0; P=0.3
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=1.1; P=0.2
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=0.4; P=0.6
Servicescapes			
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.8 \pm 1.0	5.9 \pm 1.1	T=0.08; P=0.9
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	6.0 \pm 0.7	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=1.2; P=0.2
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	5.1 \pm 1.3	5.3 \pm 1.4	T=0.8; P=0.4
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.6	T=0.1; P=0.9
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	5.9 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.7	T=0.2; P=0.9
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.8 \pm 0.8	5.7 \pm 0.9	T=0.7; P=0.4
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	5.6 \pm 0.9	5.7 \pm 0.9	T=0.7; P=0.4
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	5.9 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=1.6; P=0.1
Co-creation			
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.2 \pm 0.8	5.3 \pm 1.4	T=0.12; P=0.9
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.9	T=0.1; P=0.9
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=0.3; P=0.7
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.6	T=0.7; P=0.5
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=0.2; P=0.8
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=1.3; P=0.1
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=0.2; P=0.8
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	5.9 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 1.0	T=0.5; P=0.6

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$);

G5. Independent sample T-TEST: The association of the purpose of trip (business and leisure) with guest hotel expectation

Experience items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Business	Leisure		
Reception service				
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.3 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.5; P=.01*	0.4
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.7 \pm 1.0	5.6 \pm 0.9	T=0.2; P=0.8	
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.8 \pm 1.0	5.6 \pm 0.9	T=0.68; P=0.5	
The check-in is prompt and efficient	6.3 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=1.3; P=0.1	
Staff attributes				
The receptionist is professional in appearance	6.1 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 0.93	T=0.1; P=0.9	
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	5.2 \pm 1.3	5.0 \pm 1.3	T=1.0; P=0.3	
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.8; P=.005*	0.5
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=1.1; P=0.2	
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.2 \pm 0.7	5.9 \pm 0.9	T=2.0; P=0.05	0.4
Servicescapes				
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.8 \pm 1.1	5.91 \pm 1.0	T=0.5; P=0.6	
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	6.0 \pm 0.7	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=0.7; P=0.4	
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	5.1 \pm 1.4	5.2 \pm 1.3	T=0.25; P=0.8	
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.2 \pm 0.6	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=0.5; P=0.6	
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	5.9 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.7	T=0.6; P=0.5*	
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.9 \pm 0.8	5.7 \pm 0.9	T=1.3; P=0.1	
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	5.6 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 0.9	T=2.5; P=.01*	0.3
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	5.8 \pm 0.9	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=2.0; P=.05*	0.5
Co-creation				
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=1.1; P=0.2	
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	6.2 \pm 0.8	5.8 \pm 0.9	T=2.3; P=.021*	0.5
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.0 \pm 0.8	T=1.4; P=0.15	
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.3 \pm 0.7	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=1.4; P=0.13	
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=0.7; P=0.4	
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	6.2 \pm 0.9	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=0.03; P=0.9	
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.0 \pm 0.8	5.9 \pm 0.9	T=0.5; P=0.6	
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	5.9 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 1.0	T=0.7; P=0.4	

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$);

G6. Independent sample T-TEST: The association of travel experience with guests expectation

Expectation Items	Mean ± SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	1-5 times	6-10 times plus	
Reception service			
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.1±0.7	5.8±0.9	T=2.8; P=.005*
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	6.2±0.6	6.3±0.7	T=0.3; P=0.7
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.9±0.9	6.2±0.7	T=2.0; P=.05*
The check-in is prompt and efficient	6.2±0.8	6.3±0.9	T=1.3; P=0.1
Staff attributes			
The receptionist is professional in appearance	6.1±0.8	6.3±0.7	T=2.0; P=.05*
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	5.9±0.8	5.8±0.8	T=0.7; P=0.4
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.0±0.8	5.8±0.8	T=1.6; P=0.1
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	5.6±1.0	5.7±0.9	T=0.1; P=0.9
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.0±0.9	6.2±0.7	T=1.4; P=0.1
Servicescapes			
The layout and signage of the hotel makes it easy for me to find the reception	5.9±0.9	5.7±1.2	T=1.1; P=0.2
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	6.0±0.7	6.1± 0.7	T=1.1; P=0.2
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	5.1 ±1.4	5.2±1.2	T=0.1; P=0.9
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.2±0.8	6.5±0.7	T=2.5; P=.01*
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	6.2±0.7	6.3±0.6	T=0.5; P=0.6
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	6.1±0.7	6.0±0.7	T=1.7; P=0.08
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	6.1±0.8	5.8±0.9	T=2.2; P=.02*
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	6.1±0.7	6.0±0.9	T=1.0; P=0.3
Co-creation			
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.2±0.7	6.1±0.8	T=0.4; T=0.6
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	6.1±0.7	6.2±0.7	T=0.9; T=0.3
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.1±0.8	6.3±0.7	T=2.0; T=.05*
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.3±0.7	6.0±1.0	T=3.6; P=.001*
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	5.7±0.9	5.5±0.9	T=1.5; P=0.1
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.2±0.8	6.1±0.7	T=0.7; P=0.4
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	5.0±1.8	4.3±1.9	T=2.2; P=.02*
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	6.2±0.8	6.3±0.6	T=1.5; P=0.1

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$).

G7. Independent sample T-TEST: the association of gender with guest hotel reception experiences

Experience items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Male	Female		
Reception service				
The hotel's records of my booking was accurate	6.3 \pm 0.7	6.2 \pm 0.9	T=1.5; P=0.1	
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.8 \pm 0.9	5.5 \pm 1.0	T=2.0; P=.05*	0.3
I was able to find out the features of the hotel at check-in	5.8 \pm 0.9	5.7 \pm 0.9	T=0.6; P=0.5	
The check-in was prompt and efficient	6.2 \pm 1.0	6.0 \pm 1.0	T=1.2; P=0.2	
Staff attributes				
The Receptionist was professional in appearance	6.1 \pm 0.7	6.2 \pm 0.9	T=0.2; P=0.8	
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	4.8 \pm 1.8	4.6 \pm 1.9	T=0.4; P=0.6	
The receptionist understood my special requirements while checking-in	6.2 \pm 0.9	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=0.7; P=0.4	
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous	6.3 \pm 0.7	6.2 \pm 0.9	T=0.9; P=0.6	
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.2 \pm 0.6	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.1; P=.05*	0.1
Servicescapes				
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.8 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 0.7	T=1.4; P=0.14	
The reception area looked attractive as I approach	6.0 \pm 0.88	6.1 \pm 0.74	T=0.8; P=0.4	
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	4.9 \pm 1.81	4.8 \pm 1.90	T=0.3; P=0.7	
The reception area was neat and tidy	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=0.3; P=0.7	
The décor of the reception was visually appealing	5.6 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=0.8; P=0.3	
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	6.0 \pm 0.8	5.7 \pm 1.1	T=2.1; P=.3*	0.3
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate	5.6 \pm 1.0	5.7 \pm 1.0	T=0.2; P=0.8	
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area made me feel relaxed	5.9 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 0.8	T=0.1; P=0.9	
Co-creation				
I was given a welcome at the reception	6.0 \pm 0.7	5.9 \pm 1.1	T=1.1; P=0.2	
I was acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I entered the reception area	6.0 \pm 0.9	5.9 \pm 1.1	T=1.1; P=0.2	
The Receptionist seemed to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.1 \pm 0.8	5.9 \pm 1.0	T=1.3; P=0.1	
The receptionist communicated clearly to me	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.9	T=0.4; P=0.6	
The receptionist spoke to me in a language I understood	6.3 \pm 0.7	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=0.5; P=0.6	
The receptionist spent an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.1 \pm 0.9	5.9 \pm 1.2	T=1.1; P=0.2	
I was treated as a valued guest	6.2 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 1.1	T=0.1; P=0.9	
I was escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=2.0; P=.05*	0.2

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$)

G8. One-Way ANOVA Results: The association of age with guest hotel reception experiences

Experience items	Mean \pm SD			Sig. F-value, p-value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	18—39yrs	40-59yrs	60yrs and above		
Reception service					
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.37 \pm .71 ^a	6.17 \pm .87 ^a	6.10 \pm .87	F=3.07; P=.04*	0.25
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.67 \pm .99	5.77 \pm .95	5.2 \pm .78	F=1.86; P=.15	
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.81 \pm .99 ^a	5.88 \pm .86 ^b	5.1 \pm 1.10 ^{ab}	F=3.26; P=.03*	a=0.7; b=0.8
The check-in is prompt and efficient	6.17 \pm 1.09	6.20 \pm 1.0	5.90 \pm 1.19	F=.39; P=.67	
Staff attributes					
The receptionist is professional in appearance	6.13 \pm .84	6.18 \pm .83	6.00 \pm .81	F=.306; p=.15	
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	4.74 \pm 1.88	4.85 \pm .17	3.70 \pm 2.54	F=1.87; P=.15	
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.13 \pm .86 ^a	5.94 \pm .99 ^a	5.60 \pm .84	F=3.04; P=.04*	0.2
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.37 \pm .74 ^a	6.21 \pm .80 ^a	5.9 \pm 1.19	F=3.25; P=.04*	0.2
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.29 \pm .74	6.18 \pm .78	5.9 \pm .87	F=1.88; P=.15	
Servicescapes					
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	6.05 \pm .84	6.07 \pm .83	6.10 \pm .73	F=.23; P=.78	
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	4.74 \pm 1.88	4.85 \pm 1.78	3.7 \pm 2.54	F=1.87; P=.15	
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.22 \pm .79 ^a	5.98 \pm .77 ^a	6.10 \pm .78	F=3.91; P=.02*	0.4
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	6.08 \pm .89	5.92 \pm .89	5.80 \pm .78	F=1.66; P=.19	
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.86 \pm 1.01	5.95 \pm .75	5.7 \pm .82	F=.61; P=.54	
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	5.64 \pm 1.09	5.74 \pm 1.0	5.7 \pm 1.15	F=.38; P=.67	
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	5.95 \pm 1.01	5.95 \pm .77	5.6 \pm .84	F=.73; P=.47	
Co-creation					
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.32 \pm .78	6.16 \pm .83	6.10 \pm .73	F=1.81; P=.16	
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	6.14 \pm 1.00	5.96 \pm .99	5.80 \pm .78	F=1.85; P=.15	
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.12 \pm .93	6.03 \pm .96	6.10 \pm .73	F=.31; P=.66	
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.35 \pm .73	6.21 \pm .65	6.30 \pm .94	F=1.63; P=.19	
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.37 \pm .77	6.3 \pm .67	5.9 \pm 1.1	F=2.105; P=.12	
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	6.22 \pm 1.01	6.15 \pm 1.02	6.00 \pm 1.05	F=.37; P=.35	
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.06 \pm 1.12	5.96 \pm .95	5.70 \pm 1.49	F=.78; P=.45	
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check- in	6.18 \pm .89	6.22 \pm .79 ^a	5.6 \pm 1.26 ^a	F= 2.46; P=.05*	0.1

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

G9. One-Way ANOVA Results: The association of nationality with guests hotel reception experience

Experience items	Mean \pm SD			Sig. F-value, p-value	Size of relationship Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Ghanaians	Africans	Internationals		
Reception service					
The hotel's records of my booking was accurate	6.25 \pm .86	6.40 \pm .70	6.23 \pm .85	F=1.26; P=.28	
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.52 \pm 1.05	5.86 \pm 1.02	5.64 \pm .99	F=2.00; P=.13	
I was able to find out the features of the hotel at check-in	5.51 \pm 1.11 ^a	5.93 \pm .91 ^a	5.76 \pm .95	F=3.95; P=.02	0.4
The check-in was prompt and efficient	6.27 \pm .90	6.33 \pm .98	6.27 \pm .79	F=.15; P=.85	
Staff attributes					
The Receptionist was professional in appearance	6.06 \pm .86	6.06 \pm .96	5.95 \pm .94	F=.70; P=.85	
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	5.13 \pm 1.28	5.12 \pm 1.57	5.20 \pm 1.32	F=.15; P=.85	
The receptionist understood my special requirements while checking-in	6.15 \pm .83	6.20 \pm .76	6.14 \pm .77	F=.16; P=.89	
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous	6.32 \pm .79	6.18 \pm .77	6.13 \pm .87	F=1.58; P=.20	
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.13 \pm .97	6.17 \pm .79	6.09 \pm .80	F=2.2; P=.79	
Servicescapes					
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.69 \pm .69	5.85 \pm 1.17	5.96 \pm .94	F=1.86; P=.15	
The reception area looked attractive as I approach	6.02 \pm .86	6.09 \pm .75	6.04 \pm .75	F=1.8; P=.82	
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	5.10 \pm 1.40	5.11 \pm 1.40	5.19 \pm 1.38	F=.17; P=.84	
The reception area was neat and tidy	6.34 \pm .77	6.27 \pm .72	6.17 \pm .66	F=2.01; P=.13	
The décor of the reception was visually appealing	5.97 \pm .76	6.09 \pm .76	5.89 \pm .84	F=.108; P=.83	
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.78 \pm .92 ^a	6.10 \pm .77 ^{ab}	5.76 \pm .86 ^b	F=.48; P=.007*	aa=0.4; ab=0.4
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate	5.58 \pm 1.04	5.79 \pm .94	5.70 \pm .88	F=1.14; P=.32	
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area made me feel relaxed	6.09 \pm .80 ^a	6.10 \pm .83 ^a	5.89 \pm .90	F=2.55; P=.05*	.01
Co-creation					
I was given a welcome at the reception	6.12 \pm .87	6.17 \pm .87	6.24 \pm .73	F=.73; P=.48	
I was acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I entered the reception area	6.06 \pm .94	6.17 \pm .85	6.09 \pm .82	F=.36; P=.69	
The Receptionist seemed to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.13 \pm .82	6.21 \pm .78	6.14 \pm .73	F=.33; P=.71	
The receptionist communicated clearly to me	6.32 \pm .74	6.39 \pm .70 ^a	6.18 \pm .76 ^a	F=2.8; P=.05*	.01
The receptionist spoke to me in a language I understood	6.25 \pm .79 ^a	6.31 \pm .76 ^a	6.09 \pm .83	F=2.91; P=.05*	0.1
The receptionist spent an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.22 \pm .83	6.25 \pm .90	6.24 \pm .83	F=.03; P=.97	
I was treated as a valued guest	5.9 \pm 1.03	6.06 \pm .88	6.03 \pm .78	F=.94; P=.38	
I was escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	5.81 \pm 1.12	5.96 \pm .99	5.89 \pm .89	F=.55; P=.57	

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD

G10. One-Way ANOVA Results: The association of **highest level of education** with guest hotel reception experiences

Experience items	Mean \pm SD			Sig. F-value, p-value	Size of relationship Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Others	Degree	Post Graduate		
Reception service					
The hotel's records of my booking was accurate	6.27 \pm .88	6.3 \pm .86	6.25 \pm .70	F=.10; P=.90	
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.86 \pm 1.20	5.65 \pm 1.02	5.72 \pm .85	F=.84; P=.43	
I was able to find out the features of the hotel at check-in	5.65 \pm 1.21	5.82 \pm .92	5.86 \pm .83	F=.84; P=.43	
The check-in was prompt and efficient	6.25 \pm .95	6.19 \pm 1.11	6.14 \pm 1.03	F=.19; P=.82	
Staff attributes					
The Receptionist was professional in appearance	6.09 \pm .94	6.14 \pm .88	6.12 \pm .75	F=.66; P=.84	
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	4.88 \pm 1.63	4.46 \pm 1.99 ^a	5.02 \pm 1.72 ^a	F=3.76; P=.02*	0.3
The receptionist understood my special requirements while checking-in	6.09 \pm .84	6.10 \pm .95	5.95 \pm .93	F=1.10; P=.33	
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous	6.23 \pm .78	6.28 \pm .81	6.31 \pm .77	F=.20; P=.81	
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.27 \pm .73	6.24 \pm .89	6.20 \pm .61	F=.18; P=.83	
Servicescapes					
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.76 \pm .99	6.02 \pm .87	5.88 \pm .99	F=1.61; P=.20	
The reception area looked attractive as I approach	6.74 \pm 1.02 ^{ab}	6.06 \pm .81 ^a	6.08 \pm .816 ^b	F=2.9; P=.05*	aa=0.3, ab=0.4
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	5.17 \pm 1.48 ^b	4.50 \pm 2.1 ^{ab}	5.30 \pm 1.62 ^a	F=1.73; P=.001*	aa=0.4, ab=0.8
The reception area was neat and tidy	5.88 \pm .94	6.13 \pm .79	6.15 \pm .73	F=2.10; P=.12	
The décor of the reception was visually appealing	6.00 \pm .89	5.94 \pm .86	6.07 \pm .92	F=.79; P=.45	
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.69 \pm 1.12 ^a	5.82 \pm .99	6.03 \pm .69 ^a	F=3.29; P=.03*	0.4
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate	5.62 \pm 1.25	5.56 \pm 1.12 ^a	5.84 \pm .88 ^a	F=3.0; P=.05*	0.3
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area made me feel relaxed	5.81 \pm 1.02	5.91 \pm .95	6.0 \pm .82	F=.88; P=.41	
Co-creation					
I was given a welcome at the reception	5.97 \pm .13 ^{ab}	6.28 \pm .77 ^a	6.29 \pm .72 ^b	F=2.78; P=.05	aa=0.3, ab=0.3
I was acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I entered the reception area	5.86 \pm 1.42	6.01 \pm 1.00	6.15 \pm .83	F=1.71; P=.18	
The Receptionist seemed to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.21 \pm .81	6.05 \pm 1.00	6.07 \pm .81	F=.07; P=.93	
The receptionist communicated clearly to me	6.30 \pm .67	6.27 \pm .80	6.30 \pm .60	F=.07; P=.93	
The receptionist spoke to me in a language I understood	6.32 \pm .71	6.3 \pm .83	6.36 \pm .64	F=.30; P=.73	
The receptionist spent an appropriate amount of time on my needs	5.95 \pm 1.09	6.14 \pm 1.12	6.29 \pm .86	F=2.23; P=.10	
I was treated as a valued guest	5.86 \pm 1.21	6.04 \pm 1.17	6.02 \pm .87	F=.51; P=.29	
I was escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	6.23 \pm .78	6.10 \pm .97	6.25 \pm .75	F=1.24; P=.29	

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$); ^{ab} identifies the presence of significant differences between the groups based on post-hoc tests with the Tukey's HSD.

G11. Independent sample T-TEST: The association of the purpose of trip (business and leisure) with guest hotel reception experiences

Experience items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value	Cohen's <i>d</i>
	Business	Leisure		
Reception service				
The hotel's records of my booking was accurate	5.6 \pm 0.9	5.4 \pm 0.9	T=0.4; T=0.7	
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.6 \pm 0.9	5.7 \pm 0.9	T=0.7; P=0.7	
I was able to find out the features of the hotel at check-in	5.7 \pm 0.9	5.9 \pm 0.9	T=1.0; P=0.3	
The check-in was prompt and efficient	6.1 \pm 1.0	6.0 \pm 1.0	T=0.1; P=0.9	
Staff attributes				
The Receptionist was professional in appearance	5.7 \pm 1.0	5.6 \pm 1.	1T=0.1; p=0.8	
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	5.9 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=0.7; P=0.4	
The receptionist understood my special requirements while checking-in	6.1 \pm 1.0	6.2 \pm 0.9	T=0.5; P=0.5	
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous	6.3 \pm 0.6	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.0; P=0.05*	0.2
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.2 \pm 1.0	6.0 \pm 1.0	T=1.2; P=0.2	
Servicescapes				
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.9 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 0.8	T=0.1; P=0.9	
The reception area looked attractive as I approach	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=1.0; P=0.3	
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	4.8 \pm 1.8	5.1 \pm 1.8	T=1.1 P=0.3	
The reception area was neat and tidy	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=0.8; P=0.4	
The décor of the reception was visually appealing	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=0.4; P=0.6	
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	4.7 \pm 1.7	4.7 \pm 1.8	T=0.3; P=0.8	
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate				
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area made me feel relaxed	5.9 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=0.8; P=0.4	
Co-creation				
I was given a welcome at the reception	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.6	T=0.2; P=0.8	
I was acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I entered the reception area	6.1 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 1.1	T=0.3; P=0.7	
The Receptionist seemed to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.0 \pm 0.7	5.7 \pm 1.1	T=2.1; P=0.04*	0.3
The receptionist communicated clearly to me	5.7 \pm 0.9	5.9 \pm 0.9	T=1.0; P=0.3	
The receptionist spoke to me in a language I understood	6.1 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 1.2	T=0.1; P=0.9	
The receptionist spent an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.1 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 1.2	T=0.2; P=0.9	
I was treated as a valued guest	6.1 \pm 1.0	6.2 \pm 0.9	T=0.5; P=0.5	
I was escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=0.3; P=0.7	

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value \leq .05).

G12. Independent sample T-TEST: The association of travel experience) with guests hotel reception experiences

Experience items	Mean ± SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	1-5 times	6-10 times plus	
Reception service			
The hotel's records of my booking was accurate	6.2±0.8	6.1±0.8	T=0.2; P=0.8
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.5±1.0	5.6±1.0	T=0.2; P=0.8
I was able to find out the features of the hotel at check-in	5.8±0.9	6.2±0.7	T=1.3; P=0.1
The check-in was prompt and efficient	6.2±0.9	6.4±0.7	T=0.7; P=0.4
Staff attributes			
The Receptionist was professional	5.9±0.9	6.1±0.7	T=0.4; P=0.8
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	5.1±1.3	4.8±1.1	T=0.8; P=0.4
The receptionist understood my special requirements while checking-in	6.1±0.8	6.0±0.6	T=0.3; P=0.7
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous	6.0±0.8	6.2±0.8	T=0.3; P=0.7
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	5.8±0.8	6.2±0.7	T=1.4; P=0.1
Servicescapes			
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.9±0.9	6.1±0.7	T=0.9; P=0.3
The area looked attractive as I approach	6.0±0.7	6.1± 0.5	T=0.3; P=0.7
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	5.3 ±1.0	5.2±1.2	T=0.1; P=0.9
The reception area was neat and tidy	6.1±0.7	6.4±0.6	T=1.3; P=0.1
The décor of the reception was visually appealing	5.9±0.7	6.2±0.6	T=1.3; P=0.1
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	6.1±0.8	6.5±0.6	T=1.2; P=0.2
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate	6.0±0.7	6.1±0.8	T=0.6; P=0.5
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area made me feel relaxed	6.1±0.7	6.5±0.5	T=1.5; P=0.1
Co-creation			
I was given a welcome at the reception	6.1±0.7	6.2±0.5	T=0.3; P=0.7
I was acknowledged immediately I entered the reception area	6.0±0.8	6.2±0.7	T=0.8; P=0.4
The Receptionist seemed to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.0±0.8	6.1±0.7	T=0.4; P=0.8
The receptionist spoke to me in a language I understood	6.1±0.7	6.3±0.8	T=0.8; P=0.4
The receptionist communicated clearly to me	6.1±0.7	6.3±0.6	T=0.8; P=0.4
The receptionist spent an appropriate amount of time on my needs	5.8±0.7	5.9±0.8	T=0.5; P=0.6
I was treated as a valued guest	5.5±1.1	5.7±1.0	T=0.2; P=0.8

*denotes statistically significant difference (p - value ≤ .05).

G13. Independent sample T-TEST: The impact of hotel class international hotel versus domestic hotels on guests expectation

Expectation item	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	Domestic hotel	International hotel	
Reception service			
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=1.4; P=0.13
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.7 \pm 0.9	5.6 \pm 1.0	T=0.2; P=0.8
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.8 \pm 0.9	5.6 \pm 1.0	T=1.2; P=0.2
The check-in is prompt and efficient	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.9	T=0.6; P=0.4
Staff attributes			
The receptionist is professional in appearance	5.9 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=2.0; P=0.05*
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	5.6 \pm 1.0	4.7 \pm 1.5	T=6.7; P=0.001*
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=1.6; P=0.09
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=3.5; P=0.001*
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.9	T=0.3; P=0.7
Servicescapes			
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.7 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 1.1	T=2.6; P=0.009*
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	5.9 \pm 0.75	6.2 \pm 0.79	T=3.5; P=0.001*
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	5.6 \pm 1.1	4.6 \pm 1.5	T=7.5; P=0.001*
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.3 \pm 0.7	6.2 \pm 0.6	T=0.8; P=0.4
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	5.9 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.8	T=0.4; P=0.7
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.7 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=1.5; P=0.1
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	5.8 \pm 0.9	5.6 \pm 0.9	T=1.1; P=0.2
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	5.9 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.1; P=0.03*
Co-creation			
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=2.2; P=0.03*
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	5.9 \pm 0.9	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=3.9; P=0.001*
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=0.9; P=0.3
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=0.1; P=0.9
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=0.1; P=0.9
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=1.0; P=0.3
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	5.9 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=0.6; P=0.4
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	5.8 \pm 1.0	5.9 \pm 0.8	T=0.9; P=0.3

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$).

G14. Independent sample T-TEST: The impact of hotel class (star rating) on guests expectation

Expectation items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	3 star hotel	4-star & 5-star hotel	
Reception service			
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	6.3 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=0.3; P=0.7
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.7 \pm 1.0	5.7 \pm 1.1	T=0.2; P=0.8
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	5.7 \pm 1.0	5.8 \pm 1.0	T=1.7; P=0.08
The check-in is prompt and efficient	6.2 \pm 0.9	6.4 \pm 0.8	T=2.5; P=0.01
Staff attributes			
The receptionist is professional in appearance	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 1.0	T=0.7; P=0.4
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	5.0 \pm 1.4	5.4 \pm 1.3	T=2.9; P=0.005
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=1.2; P=0.2
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	6.3 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=1.7; P=0.09
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.0 \pm 0.9	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=2.9; P=0.003
Servicescapes			
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	6.0 \pm 0.9	5.7 \pm 1.3	T=2.1; P=0.03
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.7	T=2.5; P=0.01
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	5.0 \pm 1.5	5.3 \pm 1.3	T=2.8; P=0.005
The reception area is neat and tidy	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=0.2; P=0.8
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.8	T=0.8; P=0.4
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.8 \pm 0.9	5.9 \pm 0.9	T=0.8; P=0.4
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	5.6 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 1.0	T=2.0; P=0.04
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=0.6; P=0.6
Co-creation			
I am given a welcome at the reception	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=1.4; P=0.1
I am acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I enter the reception area	6.1 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=0.8; P=0.4
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.1 \pm 0.7	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=0.2; P=0.8
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=1.3; P=0.18
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=0.1; P=0.9
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	5.8 \pm 0.9	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=4.6; P=0.000
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	6.1 \pm 1.0	6.5 \pm 0.7	T=4.2; P=0.000
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	5.8 \pm 1.9	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.7; P=0.007

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$).

G15. Independent sample T-TEST: The impact of hotel class - International hotels versus domestic hotels on the perception of guest hotel reception experience

Experience items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P-value
	Domestic hotel	International hotel	
Reception service			
The hotel's records of my booking was accurate	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.4 \pm 0.7	T=3.1; P=0.002*
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.8 \pm 0.9	5.5 \pm 1.0	T=2.9; P=0.004*
I was able to find out the features of the hotel at check-in	5.8 \pm 0.8	5.7 \pm 1.0	T=0.8; P=0.3
The check-in was prompt and efficient	6.0 \pm 1.0	6.4 \pm 0.9	T=3.6; P=0.001) *
Staff attributes			
The Receptionist was professional in appearance	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=2.2; P=0.02*
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	5.7 \pm 1.2	3.5 \pm 1.7	T=13.6; P=0.001*
The receptionist understood my special requirements while checking-in	5.9 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=1.6; P=0.09
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=0.7; P=0.4
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.1 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=2.0; P=0.05*
Servicescapes			
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	5.8 \pm 0.8	6.0 \pm 1.0	T=1.2; P=0.1
The reception area looked attractive as I approach	6.1 \pm 0.7	6.0 \pm 0.9	T=0.1; P=0.9
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	6.1 \pm 0.9	3.5 \pm 1.7	T=17.0; P=0.001*
The reception area was neat and tidy	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.7	T=2.5; P=0.01*
The décor of the reception was visually appealing	6.0 \pm 0.9	5.9 \pm 0.8	T=2.0; P=0.04*
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.7 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 0.7	T=2.5; P=0.01*
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate	5.7 \pm 1.0	5.6 \pm 1.0	T=0.6; P=0.5
The atmosphere/ ambiance of the reception area made me feel relaxed	5.8 \pm 0.9	6.0 \pm 0.8	T=1.4; P=0.1
Co-creation			
I was given a welcome at the reception	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.8	T=0.1; P=0.8
I was acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I entered the reception area	6.0 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 1.0	T=0.5; P=0.5
The Receptionist seemed to be interested in my needs during check-in	6.0 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 1.0	T=1.1; P=0.2
The receptionist communicated clearly to me	6.2 \pm 0.6	6.4 \pm 0.7	T=2.1; P=0.03*
The receptionist spoke to me in a language I understood	6.2 \pm 0.7	6.4 \pm 0.7	T=2.0; P=0.05*
The receptionist spent an appropriate amount of time on my needs	5.8 \pm 1.0	6.1 \pm 1.0	T=3.0; P=0.003
I was treated as a valued guest	6.0 \pm 1.0	6.3 \pm 0.9	T=2.1;P=0.03*
I was escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.2 \pm 0.8	T=0.3; P=0.7

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$).

G16. Independent sample T-TEST: The impact of star rating on guests perception of hotel experiences

Experience items	Mean \pm SD		Sig. T-value, P value
	3 star hotel	4-star & 5-star hotel	
Reception service			
The hotel's records of my booking was accurate	6.3 \pm 0.7	6.3 \pm 0.9	T=0.8; P=0.4
I was able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	5.6 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 1.0	T=2.2; P=0.02*
I was able to find out the features of the hotel at check-in	5.8 \pm 0.9	5.9 \pm 0.9	T=1.4; P=0.1
The check-in was prompt and efficient	6.3 \pm 1.0	6.1 \pm 1.2	T=1.9; P=0.04*
Staff attributes			
The Receptionist was professional in appearance	6.1 \pm 0.8	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=0.3; P=0.8
The receptionist's appearance reflected the culture of the destination	4.3 \pm 1.9	5.4 \pm 1.5	T=5.7; P=0.001*
The receptionist understood my special requirements while checking-in	6.0 \pm 1.0	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=1.0; P=0.3
The Receptionist was friendly and courteous	6.2 \pm 0.9	6.4 \pm 0.7	T=2.7; P=0.007*
The Receptionist was knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	6.2 \pm 0.8	6.3 \pm 0.7	T=2.1; P=0.03
Servicescapes			
The layout and signage of the hotel made it easy for me to find the reception	6.0 \pm 0.9	5.8 \pm 0.9	T=3.0; P=0.003*
The reception area looked attractive as I approach	6.0 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 0.8	T=0.9; P=0.3
The design of the reception area reflected the culture of the destination	4.3 \pm 2.1	5.8 \pm 1.1	T=8.0; P=0.0001*
The reception area was neat and tidy	6.1 \pm 0.7	6.1 \pm 1.0	T=0.2; P=0.8
The décor of the reception was visually appealing	6.0 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.1; P=0.04*
I felt comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	5.9 \pm 0.8	5.9 \pm 1.0	T=0.7; P=0.4
The furniture/furnishing at the reception was appropriate	5.5 \pm 1.0	6.0 \pm 1.1	T=3.4; P=0.001*
The atmosphere/ambience of the reception area made me feel relaxed	5.8 \pm 0.9	6.1 \pm 0.9	T=2.5; P=0.01
Co-creation			
I was given a welcome at the reception	6.2 \pm 0.9	6.4 \pm 0.8	T=2.0; P=0.04*
I was acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I entered the reception area	6.0 \pm 1.0	6.1 \pm 1.0	T=1.4; P=0.1

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$).

Appendix H Importance performance grid: impact of Hotel class on guest expectations and experiences

H1. Hotel brands: international hotel versus domestic hotel

Expectation and experience items	Experience Mean \pm SD	Rank	Expectation Mean \pm SD	Rank
Reception service				
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	T=3.1; P=0.002*	2	T=1.4; P=0.13	12
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	T=2.9; P=0.004*	5	T=0.2; P=0.8	10
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	T=0.8; P=0.3	12	T=1.2; P=0.2	6
The check-in is prompt and efficient	T=3.6; P=0.001)*	1	T=0.6; P=0.4	8
Staff attributes				
The receptionist is professional in appearance	T=2.2; P=0.02*	6	T=2.0; P=0.05*	4
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	T=13.6; P=0.001*	1	T=6.7; P=0.001*	1
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	T=1.6; P=0.09	16	T=1.6; P=0.09	11
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	T=0.7; P=0.4	13	T=3.5; P=0.001*	1
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	T=2.0; P=0.05*	9	T=0.3; P=0.7	9
Servicescapes				
The layout and signage of the hotel makes it easy for me to find the reception	T=1.2; P=0.1	10	T=2.6; P=0.009*	2
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	T=0.1; P=0.9	16	T=3.5; P=0.001*	1
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	T=17.0; P=0.001*	1	T=7.5; P=0.001*	1
The reception area is neat and tidy	T=2.5; P=0.01*	5	T=0.8; P=0.4	8
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	T=2.0; P=0.04*	8	T=0.4; P=0.7	9
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	T=2.5; P=0.01*	5	T=1.5; P=0.1	5
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	T=0.6; P=0.5	14	T=1.1; P=0.2	6
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	T=1.4; P=0.1	10	T=2.1; P=0.03*	3
Co-creation				
I am given a welcome at the reception	T=0.1; P=0.8	16	T=2.2; P=0.03*	3
I was acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I entered the reception area	T=0.5; P=0.5	14	T=3.9; P=0.001*	1
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	T=1.1; P=0.2	11	T=0.9; P=0.3	7
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	T=2.1; P=0.03*	7	T=0.1; P=0.9	11
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	T=2.0; P=0.05*	9	T=0.1; P=0.9	11
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	T=3.0; P=0.003*	3	T=1.0; P=0.3	7
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	T=2.1; P=0.03*	7	T=0.6; P=0.4	8
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	T=0.3; P=0.7	15	T=0.9; P=0.3	7

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$).

H2: Hotel star rating: 3-star versus 4 and 5-star

Expectation and experience items	Experience Mean \pm SD	Rank	Expectation Mean \pm SD	Rank
Reception service				
The hotel's records of my booking are accurate	T=0.8; P=0.4	12	T=0.3; P=0.7	15
I am able to find out about attractions in the area at check-in	T=2.2; P=0.02	6	T=0.2; P=0.8	16
I am able to find out about the features of the hotel at check-in	T=1.4; P=0.1	9	T=1.7; P=0.08	8
The check-in is prompt and efficient	T=1.9; P=0.04	8	T=2.5; P=0.01	5
Staff attributes				
The receptionist is professional in appearance	T=0.3; P=0.8	14	T=0.7; P=0.4	13
The receptionist's appearance reflects the culture of the destination	T=5.7; P=0.00	1	T=2.9; P=0.005	3
The receptionist understands my special requirements while checking-in	T=1.0; P=0.3	11	T=1.2; P=0.2	10
The Receptionist is friendly and courteous	T=2.7; P=0.007	4	T=1.7; P=0.09	9
The Receptionist is knowledgeable about the hotel and check-in procedures	T=2.1; P=0.03	7	T=2.9; P=0.003	2
Servicescapes				
The layout and signage of the hotel makes it easy for me to find the reception	T=3.0; P=0.003	3	T=2.1; P=0.03	6
The reception area looks attractive as I approach	T=0.9; P=0.3	11	T=2.5; P=0.01	5
The design of the reception area reflects the culture of the destination	T=8.0; P=0.000	1	T=2.8; P=0.005	3
The reception area is neat and tidy	T=0.2; P=0.8	14	T=0.2; P=0.8	16
The décor of the reception is visually appealing	T=2.1; P=0.04	8	T=0.8; P=0.4	13
I feel comfortable with the temperature while at the reception area	T=0.7; P=0.4	12	T=0.8; P=0.4	12
The furniture/furnishing at the reception is appropriate	T=3.4; P=0.001	2	T=2.0; P=0.04	7
The ambience of the reception area makes me feel relaxed	T=2.5; P=0.01	5	T=0.6; P=0.6	14
Co-creation				
I am given a welcome at the reception	T=2.0; P=0.04	8	T=1.4; P=0.1	12
I was acknowledged immediately by the receptionist when I entered the reception area	T=1.4; P=0.1	9	T=0.8; P=0.4	13
The receptionist seems to be interested in my needs during check-in	T=1.1; P=0.2	10	T=0.2; P=0.8	16
The receptionist communicates clearly to me	T=1.3; P=0.1	9	T=1.3; P=1.8	17
The receptionist speaks to me in a language I understand	T=1.4; P=1.6	15	T=0.1; P=0.9	9
I am treated as a valued guest during check-in	T=1.2; P=0.2	10	T=4.6; P=0.000	1
The receptionist spends an appropriate amount of time on my needs	T=0.4; P=0.7	13	T=4.2; P=0.000	1
I am escorted to my room by the staff upon check-in	T=2.4; P=0.01	5	T=2.7; P=0.007	4

*denotes statistically significant difference (p -value $\leq .05$).